MATHILDA OF CANOSSA,

AND

YOLAND OF GRONINGEN.

BY

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TRANSLATED BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

In this powerfully drawn picture of the manners customs, and superstitions of the Middle Ages, the illustrious author has also given us a true and accurate account of the great struggle between the Emperor Henry IV. and Gregory VII., the great Pope, involving, as it did, the most sacred liberties of the Church. On the one hand, thrown into strong relief by the dark background of Henry's iniquities, is the grand figure of Gregory, an old man, engaged in a single-handed contest against the great ones of the earth, braving all dangers, enduring all hardships, for the glorious cause to which his life was devoted, the liberty of the Church, the reformation of abuses, and the glory of his Divine Master. On the other hand, we find Henry plunging into a mad vortex of crime and excess, and without even the redeeming quality of manly fortitude in bearing the reverses which were the inevitable result of his career. Aroused by the impending loss of his crown, he crosses the Alps, appears abject and pitiful before the gates of Canossa to implore pardon of the Pope, an object of scornful compassion to the courtiers of Mathilda. With solemn vows of amendment and restitution upon his lips, he goes forth from the presence of Gregory absolved indeed in the sight of men, but oh! how black before God, to plot a cowardly and treacherous attempt on the life and liberty of the generous Pontiff. In this prolonged contest we are struck by its great similitude with the troubles and dissensions of our own day. Germany is once more the theatre of action, centuries have rolled between, and on the throne of Peter sits, not Gregory, but Pius. The war is not, however, against an individual Pope, but a living and abiding principle, an unchangeable, ay, and an unconquerable foe—the Church of Christ in the person of its Vicar; therefore, though Henry is almost forgotten in the silence of ages, though his cause against Gregory has long since been decided at the great tribunal, there is a host of bitter and unscrupulous enemies combating once more against God and his Vicar, seeking once more to wrest from the Church her sacred liberties. Their name is legion, their strength is great, yet in future times shall other pens record and other hearts rejoice at the glorious triumph of Pius, who will stand, either in his own person, or in that of his successor, in calm and unshaken majesty, when his persecutors, having exhausted their puny efforts against the mighty and eternal rock, and worn out with the useless struggle, are sleeping in unhallowed graves or mourning a life of wasted endeavors. We can, indeed, wait with patience till the end, when the great heart of the Catholic world shall be filled with rejoicing and the day of tribulation shall have passed away.

In the life of the great Italian heroine we find portrayed the noblest virtues which adorn the Christian character. Her undaunted courage, lofty mind, and steadfast faith are equalled only by her gentle tenderness and magnanimous forbearance—as where, for instance, she solicits from the Pope pardon and absolution for Henry, or when, after her great triumph, she bids Ottocar, her deadly and hitherto inveterate foe, go forth in freedom to do battle for the Sepulchre of Christ. Our later historians unite in deploring the darkness of the Middle Ages, fostered by the Church of Rome. But where do they find in the history of the world one who did more for the advancement of literature, art, and science than this Catholic princess, this devoted adherent of the See of Rome? Yoland of Groningen is a gentle and charming creation of the author's mind. We are filled with admiration at her truth and courage, her sweet and touching devotion to Our Lady, who so visibly protects and consoles her in her great trials. Her father, Pandolph, is but a type of the brave and loyal Christian knights who abounded in those so-called ages of barbarism. The Abbot Daufer is a fine impersonation of the character, by no means uncommon in those days, of an humble and saintly monk, who, in time of need, could buckle on his armor and do battle for truth and justice. The hermit Manfred strikes us as being one of the finest and loftiest conceptions in the book. His austere and solitary life, his unbounded charity, and great influence over the neighboring people, powerfully attract our interest. The brave and generous but lawless and misguided Ottocar excites our sympathy and fixes our attention. In Swatiza the Bohemian is found the mingling of better instincts with the wild and undisciplined workings of her gipsy nature. These and a host of other secondary characters give full testimony to the author's great creative powers and facility for vivid and forcible descriptions, such as we find in the gloomy dungeon of the Castle of Brunn, where Ottocar and the conjurers stand within the charmed circle, surrounded by demons and phantoms of evil.

In offering this translation to the public, with all its defects, the translator claims their charitable indulgence. It was to her a labor of love to endeavor to reproduce in the English language the author's noble vindication of the austere and saintly although much-misrepresented Hildebrand, and his touching tribute to the memory of the illustrious Catholic princess, Mathilda of Canossa.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE
Gunzone's Recollections, ... 9

CHAPTER II.

The Castle of Canossa, ... 32

CHAPTER III.

Yoland de Groningen, ... 53

CHAPTER IV.

Ottocar de Brunn, ... 71

CHAPTER V.

The Nocturnal Voice, ... 88

CHAPTER VI.

The Lord Abbot Daufer, ... 108

CHAPTER VII.

Snares, ... 133

CHAPTER VIII.

Troubadours and Magicians, ... 158

CHAPTER IX.

Temptation and Violence, ... 179

CHAPTER X.

Gerberge of Drosendorf, ... 200

CHAPTER XI.

PAGE

The Hermit's Cave, ... 225

CHAPTER XII.

The Mystery Unveiled, ... 247

CHAPTER XIII.

The Ruined Castle, ... 272

CHAPTER XIV.

Manfred of Travemund, ... 300

CHAPTER XV.

The Solitary of the Lake, ... 329

CHAPTER XVI.

The Baths of Albano, ... 357

CHAPTER XVII.

Henry IV., ... 382

CHAPTER XVIII.

Gregory VII., ... 405

CHAPTER XIX.

The Passage of the Alps, ... 426

CHAPTER XX.

The Tomb of Beatrice, ... 444

CHAPTER XXI.

Henry IV. at Canossa, ... 466

CHAPTER XXII.

The Metropolis of Modena, ... 489

CHAPTER XXIII.

Conclusion, ... 511

CHAPTER I.

GUNZONE'S RECOLLECTIONS.

In a vast and beautiful plain of the country of Reggio which is watered by the rivers Enza and Crostelo, under the shade of an ancient and tufted elm, sat four of the falconers of the Countess Mathilda. They were waiting till the high and mighty lady should come forth from the fortress of Canossa, to follow the falcon in the marshes which, at the period when this story commences—that is to say, towards the decline of the twelfth century—stretched over the plains of Lombardy, now so fertile, but then covered with forests and swamps caused by the overflowing of the rivers. The oldest of these falconers was called Gunzone; he had been chief falconer to Boniface, the father of Mathilda, and had taken as assistant Marculfe, a man of mature age, having passed his fortieth year. Vidbode and Goldasto, the other two grooms, were strong and vigorous young men. Gunzone had sent them, at dawn, to the banks of the Enza, to seek for traces of the woodcocks, herons, or cranes; therefore Goldasto had taken his way by St. Paul's ford, and Vidbode had gone along higher up towards that of Ciano. Both had returned at sunrise, saying that on the banks of the Enza there were great numbers of cranes and lapwings; that flocks of kingfishers, wild geese, and ducks had appeared in the swamp, and that the outskirts of the woods were ringing with the cries of the pheasant and the red and gray partridge, whilst the doves and wood-pigeons were building in the foliage.

"That is good!" said Gunzone. "We shall have something pleasing to our lady and mistress and diverting to the fair Yoland, who so much affects the chase."

"And gives thee so much drinking-money," said Marculfe; "without counting what comes to thee from Madame, thou findest means to secure in the sharing a good third more than what we receive."

"And is not that just? Was not I falconer to the old Count? Did he not charge me to teach the little countess fowling when she was no higher than that, and when she was even then, I swear to you, as quick and lively as a country lass? I gave her the first lessons with a goshawk so well trained that at the least sign he would come on one's hand like a house-sparrow, and so tame that he would perch on one's shoulder and caress one like a little dog. But his skill was still more admirable. Sometimes from the top of the little hill of Rosena, where we used to go, the little countess would let him slip, now on the whistling blackbirds, now on the jays—a very cunning kind of bird, as thou knowest, and very hard to catch; but the falcon, with four strokes of his wings, would seize him at once. He would even slyly pounce upon the woodcock, whose flight is jerking, uncertain, and irregular; the hawk would be upon it like a flash, and throw him on the ground. He had so much spirit and fire that he was not afraid to attack the buzzard and the wild hawk; he would throw himself upon them and tear their feathers. It was beautiful to watch him making a circle around his enemy, and thus rising till he was almost in the clouds, then falling perpendicularly, and fastening upon him and bringing him to the ground as his prey. The old lord, who followed us at some distance, would rejoin us, and after having caressed his daughter, who had given him such fine sport, he would turn to me, saying, 'Gunzone, thou wilt show thyself at the buttery,' and I never failed to be there at the dinner hour. If thou hadst seen the platefuls of scraps that Bartaride, the valet, would bring me! There were all the gifts of God. There were partridges and woodcocks, whole kids' heads, pork-chops, slices of sucking calf, pieces of white bread, and my cup filled with pure wine. I would have all that I required from Sunday to Thursday for myself and my poor Mattea, whose soul may God keep!"

"Go to!" cried Vidbode. "The Marquis Boniface had good falcons no doubt, but that he had as many and as strong ones as those of the Lady Mathilda I can scarcely believe. Just look on my roosts at those ten lanner falcons and those eight mountaineers—all rough tilters. Goldasto holds twenty-four ten sparrow-hawks, ten speckled goshawks, and four pilgrim birds that are worth the ransom of a king. Thou thyself, Gunzone, carriest on thy wrist two couples of rare breed that will attack the eagle beyond the clouds. Marculfe has more than twenty of all races: goshawks, tiercels, musket-hawks, all swift and full of fire. Just tell me, then, has the emperor as many and as vigorous, with stronger claws, with sharper beak, swifter to pounce upon their prey, more fierce in attacking and overcoming it?"

"I say nothing about the emperor, but I know that the Marquis Boniface owned more than any lord in the west. Will you believe that his falconries and coops covered half a mile of ground? Listen a bit. The great Albert governed, in the name of the old lord, the good town of Mantua; the Marquis sent him to the Emperor Henry II. to offer presents to that prince. Albert added to the offering of his sovereign lord a hundred palfreys of great price and two hundred falcons of all races and of every kind of plumage, trained for all manner of hunting."

"Powers of heaven!" cried the two young men. "Two hundred falcons for a mere gift! And he no doubt kept some for his own use?"

"To be sure. Now, if a simple viscount, a vassal and feudatory of the Marquis, could make such a present, how much greater must be the falconry of his lord? We were sixty-five, falconers, chief-falconers, hawkers, and grooms of falconry, without counting the masters of the coops, who cooped a hundred falcons at a time, so that the Marquis could at any time go a-hunting. He never went to the chase without letting slip a hundred or even two hundred falcons. The grooms of the hounds, the huntsmen, were more than a hundred, and all of them, as well as ourselves, wore the same livery, only that they had a horn in their shoulder-belt, and that their hat was ornamented with the tail of a hare, a marten, or even a fox, whilst ours had a tuft of pheasant or heron feathers. Their doublets were of buckskin, spotted with white, the hairy side out, and ours, as now, were of the skin of chamois deer, with boots of coarse Bulgarian leather, to protect us from the damp of the marshes and bogs."

"In such fashion," added Goldasto, "that the equipage of the chase occupied all the space which remained behind the falconry, and extended as far back as the left side of the stables."

"Not at all," replied Gunzone; "the stables were on the same side as the barns and coach-houses, from the pillars of which were hung thousands of shields, lances, and swords, polished and shining so that they dazzled the eyes. In the stalls there were three hundred steeds, coursers, palfreys, Spanish horses, and others of spirit and mettle. Besides this, in the coach-houses were to be seen caparisons, shirts of mail, stars, brocade, velvet of exceeding richness; and then came saddles with pommels of gold and silver, head-stalls of steel, cruppers with golden fringe and tassels . . ."

"In a word, an outfit worthy of an emperor," said Marculfe. "I often heard my grandfather say that King Conrad, speaking of the Marquis, said: 'Boniface, the richest of Christian princes. . .'"

"Perhaps thou wouldst tell this to me—I, who knew him when, as a little child, I was with my father, who was training the falcons of Biannello. My father—God rest his soul!—was his falconer when the Marquis went to Lotharingia to espouse the Lady Beatrice, who was the daughter of Duke Frederic and Mathilda of Sweden, who was the mother of our mistress, and whom thou didst know well, Marculfe."

"She wished me well and was bountiful towards me. She was in truth a great lady; . . . therefore all the world honored her as a queen."

"Well, comrades, my father, who formed part of the Marquis' suite when he went into Lotharingia, often related the marvels of that journey. Just imagine the horses' bits of gold, the head-pieces ornamented with bullion and pearls, and strewn with precious stones; all the clasps were of silver, even on the ponies, the saddle-bows worked in gold, the saddle-cloths all richly embroidered, and the stirrups sometimes of plain gold, sometimes enamelled or carved. In a word, to cut it short, I heard tell that the Marquis had all his saddle-horses shod in silver, forbidding the blacksmiths to fasten the nails which kept them on—which were also of silver—in such fashion that the horses would lose them on the road; and they were forbidden to pick them up, but were to put on new ones. Therefore," he said, "ye should see the poor people hastening to pick them up, and the way they gaped at sight of such magnificence."

"These were lords indeed. Horseshoes of

silver! . . . not fastened! . . . and which they did not deign to pick up! . . ."

"Ye have not heard all yet. The steed of the Marquis was so richly caparisoned that the saddle-cloth alone was worth a province from the precious stones that glittered upon it. It fell over the crupper and down to the legs, over the flanks and the breast-piece, in scallops studded with diamonds and other precious stones. The head-piece was of pure gold, ornamented to the very top with rubies of inestimable price. Besides, all this magnificence was not for the Marquis only. . . . The barons, esquires, archers, trumpeters, and even simple grooms had their part in it. My father's doublet was so loaded with gold and silver that the chamois-skin of which it was made could scarcely be seen."

"It was, no doubt," said Marculfe, "that which he wore at the nuptials of our lady with Duke Godfrey. I was very young then, but I remember well. I have never since seen so much pomp at the feasts of the Lady Mathilda."

"Oh! then," cried Gunzone, "my father—God give him rest!—told me that the nuptials of our Countess with our Prince, however magnificent, could not compare with those of the Lord Boniface, her father, with Lady Beatrice. The rejoicings were prolonged for three months in his royal villa of Marengo, on the banks of the Mincio, not far from Mantua. I dare not describe it to ye, for ye would treat me as a liar, it was so brilliant and maintained so royally. The greatest lords of

France, Germany, and Italy were there. They were astounded at such splendor, and cried out with one voice that in all Christendom there was not a more magnificent prince than the Marquis."

"Bah! go to! for if thou hast it from thy father, it must be true; for he was a worthy man, not such as would speak falsely. Marculfe knew him well."

"I will only tell ye what he has related to me a hundred times at the fireside in the long winter evenings. Thus, he declared that the palace of the Marquis was everywhere resplendent with rich hangings of silk and purple, and with tapestries, and that every room was thus decorated. The floors were of foreign marbles; the ceilings, painted and gilded, were inlaid with ivory and ebony. The furniture was heavily carved and ornamented with massive gold. The beds were hidden by counterpanes and curtains of damask and brocade. In the halls set apart for the repasts, tables were served at all times; sideboards were arranged in order, and the dove cots, rabbit-burrows, poultry yards, parks, and slaughter-houses abounded in animals of all sorts. But the Marquis did not content himself with keeping up great state for himself alone. He received and treated his guests nobly according to their rank; he feasted them and provided a thousand amusements for them. Long tables were often set out under the large pavilions of silk, in the midst of the field which stretched in front of the castle, beneath the shade of tufted elms and plane trees, whose foliage stirred at the breath of the breeze. In the middle of the lawn was placed a large fountain, which, in place of water, gave forth a rare and generous wine. It was drawn up by means of two silver buckets attached to a long chain of the same metal. These two buckets went up or down alternately full or empty, and their contents were poured into large golden goblets and placed on the table before the guests."

"Odsheart! my friends, what good cheer!" cried Vidbode. "Why was I not there? How tenderly I should have caressed those beautiful golden vases, if I did not indeed give the preference to the two buckets themselves! I should have attached myself to them, and drained them dry without any one having need to coax me, as I do my horse when I would get him to drink. Ah! Gunzone, who can say in what state thy father retired that evening? . . . That's what might be called drinking like a fish. Wine from a bucket! I should be content, though, just now to have it in a pitcher. Tell us, Gunzone, what cheer did they make?"

"Cheer such that with the leavings they fed the whole country besides when the people of the castle were well replenished. And do not suppose that the dishes were presented to the guests by ordinary valets; no, indeed, they were brought from the kitchen on richly-saddled palfreys. To the table of the lady of the castle and the other noble ladies they were sent on two snow-white nags, covered with scarlet saddle-cloths embroidered in gold and ornamented with emeralds, rubies, and sapphires, having on their heads rich heron plumes and tassels of gold and precious stones which shone like the stars. To the Marquis's table the viands were brought on magnificent palfreys covered with crimson velvet, with gold breast-pieces, and the arms of the master carved in silver on large shields which adorned the corners of the saddle-cloth, the borders of which displayed fringes of silk and gold. The nags and palfreys were accompanied by two dish-bearers, and followed by marshals who held the large silver dishes on which were smoking partridges, pheasants, and peacocks which were to be carved on the trenchers. There came whole roasted boars, bucks, kids, young pigs, calves, served with basil, thyme, mint, and rosemary, which gave forth a pleasant fragrance. . . . God knows all. . . . Then came basins of gold, in which were heaped fat geese, ducks, turkeys,* laid on vermicelli and macaroni. Then came the fish-kettles, loaded with monstrous fishes—sturgeons as large as the shaft of a cart; the spits, garnished with game of all sorts; dishes full of pastry of every kind; high stands which could scarcely contain the heaps of rosy apples, mellow pears, quinces, Catalonian plums, and yellow plums, whose varied colors were exquisitely pleasing to the sight."

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* The learned author here commits an anachronism, as the turkey was only introduced in Europe in the seventeenth century. What makes this slight error more amusing is that we owe the importation of this magnificent bird to the celebrated society of which Father Bresciani is so distinguished a member.

"By Bacchus!" cried Goldasto, "that was feasting for epicures; and all that lasted three months. But where the deuce did the Marquis procure all these boars, bucks, kids, and all those cart-loads of provisions?"

"Bah! that gave him no trouble," answered Gunzone. "Just imagine that the spices necessary to season all these were in such great quantities that they could not pound enough with a mortar. They had to be ground at the grain-mill. It was a sight to see the bushels and sacks of nutmegs, the tons of cloves, coriander, pepper, cinnamon, and all the ingredients to take away the breath. The good lord had the venison and boars from his parks, his woods, and swamps; his falcons brought him the feathered game; his hare-hounds the rabbits and hares; his pointers the partridges, pheasants, and woodcocks. His pastures fattened for him the beef, mutton, the kids and calves; the river Po gave up to him its sturgeons; the ditches of Mantua supplied its eels; the sea-shores of Mesola and Spina gave their numberless fishes."

"The deuce! . . . The lands of the Marquis extended to the sea?" asked Marculfe.

"Yes, to be sure. . . . And where has not our master lands? He has as many as a crowned king. The Reverend Father Donizone, who dwells up there in the Convent of Canossa, and who is so learned that he is the wonder of all the monks, said one day to the esquire Adewaldo, then one of our mistress's pages, that the Marquis Boniface was so rich and powerful a lord that from the rock of Canossa, from which can be observed nearly the whole of Lombardy, only a third of his possessions can be seen. So ye can judge! If we look to the right, we find Reggio, Modena, Ferrara; and from there, going down along the Po, there are Polesine, Adria, Comacchio, as far as the Adriatic. Ye would see if they did not extend to the sea, and if the gold-fish, flounders, mullets, and gurnets were not caught within his possessions. If from the high tower of Canossa we turn to the left, we should discover Parma, Piacenza, Cremona, Mantua. It is but little, as ye see. Well, all that is nothing beside that which he possesses on the other side of the mountain. Beyond the Frignano and the Garfagnana he has magnificent lands. Go on to Mount Bardona, up as far as Ancisa; go down again towards Macra, and thou wilt find Pontremoli, Carrara, Massa, and the sea again. The sea, dost thou understand? Therefore the Marquis was master of two seas, was he not, my masters? While Father Donizone was holding this discourse with our noble Adelwaldo I was listening with open mouth; but some time after the Lady Beatrice sent me to carry six falcons to one of her barons of Lucca, and then I saw the sea with my own eyes from the height of a little hill near Viareggio."

"Is there fish in that sea?" asked Vidbode.

"What a question! Why, of course there is, and good, and in great quantities, and I ate some of it at

Lucca, in the castle of the baron who dwells there for the Countess Mathilda. There I saw fish of the species called chub-fish, as large as my arm. I stayed six months at Lucca to teach the art of falconry to the baron's grooms. They declared that a large part of Tuscany is under our mistress's command. I even found there Welfe de Spoleto, who declared that she reigns and is ruler in Umbria, even to Camerino, and over many of the countries which are called the Marshes."

"And did all that belong to the Marquis Boniface, her father?"

"To be sure; and to this may be added the towns, the lands, and the castles which he possessed in Lotharingia, and which his wife brought him as a dowry. He could therefore very easily entertain the train which we spoke of a moment since, and treat the lords and gentlemen so well that they could say: 'In truth, Boniface is as magnificent as a crowned king.' Without counting the grand presents which he made to his guests—to some, caparisoned steeds with velvet coverings and head-pieces of silver; to others, breast-plates of the finest steel, wrought in gold; now it would be helmets with glittering crests, shields of burnished silver, embossed with gold; again, swords with hilts adorned with precious stones, with blades of the finest temper, all carved, engraved, and enamelled—there were presents of falcons of rare breeds; dogs of all kinds—house-dogs, hounds, Danish dogs. The Marquis was no less courteous towards the ladies. He presented them with crowns of precious stones, bracelets, clasps, ear-rings, clusters of diamonds, pearls, and carved coral, all jewels of great price, and wrought with exquisite art in the workshops of the goldsmiths of Burgundy, or sent from Granada, Murcia, or Saragossa by the most skilful Moorish jewellers, who had added marvels of their art in filigree, in open work, and in rich enamels. Do not suppose, however, that the distribution of these presents ended the festivities. No, indeed; the Marquis had brought thither from all countries bands of troubadours, minstrels, and jugglers, who by their songs, their tales, their music, and their sleight of hand, provided novel amusements for the noble guests. The lord wished that they should also take part in the rejoicings; and ye will no doubt shake your head in unbelief if I tell ye that more than six hundred doublets of cloth were distributed to them on this occasion, with as many hoods of cloth of silver and gold, and of velvet, brocade, and of watered silk; surcoats of marten, sable, or ermine fur, with clasps of rubies, topazes, beryls, emeralds, and garnets, which increased the price of each garment to fifty or even a hundred gold besants."

"What fibs, comrade!" cried Goldasto. "Why, if even the wells that you spoke of were filled with besants instead of wine, I swear to thee it would scarcely suffice for such prodigality."

"Thou understandest nothing at all about it, my poor Goldasto, and that is why thou wouldst do better to be silent, great simpleton that thou art. Listen: the Marquis had, besides all this, enough of money to bury us all four underneath it, with our falcons, roosts, pikes, and caps. The Emperor Henry II., during a campaign in which the Marquis was engaged, was dining under his tent. A roast buck was served with a dressing of salad, the seasoning of which was of Lucca oil and a certain kind of vinegar which, a hundred years before, had been placed in his cellars of Modena by Azzo, the founder of Canossa, and an ancestor of the Marquis. The Emperor, after tasting the vinegar, which flowed like oil, cried: 'This is balm, Marquis; it is not vinegar.' The Marquis said nothing at the time, but as soon as he returned to Canossa he sent for skilful workmen, and commanded them to make a large cask of pure silver. These men went to work with such care that the pipe-staves, hoops, the head, and even the nails in the hoops, and the bung-hole could be distinguished; the spout and the stopper alone were masterpieces of art. Then he had a cart made, with its racks, its bars, its axle-trees, its sides, its wheels, with their massive nave and cross-lines, the shafts, the reins and harness, all of the same metal. There was silver enough, I hope. Well, that is not all. He had made two oxen of admirable workmanship; the tails with the tufts of hair, the fetlock, the polished and crooked horns, all could be distinguished. . . ."

"Oh! that is too much, Gunzone," cried his three companions; "that is too strong and too hard to digest; the more we listen, the more thou wilt tell us. Meanest thou to say that the silver oxen walked and drew the cart?"

"No; not at all. The silver ones did not walk, but they were drawn by two young bulls from the neighborhood of Reggio—two beasts as large as elephants almost. The Marquis charged his Viscount Albert to escort the cask full of this famous vinegar to Piacenza, where the Emperor then was, and to present it to him. On seeing such a magnificent present the prince was amazed.

"'Wonderful!' cried he. 'Why, even if our falcons laid eggs of gold and silver, what would that be in comparison with the Marquis's treasures?'

"And after all this," continued Gunzone, "at his death he still left enough to his wife Beatrice and to his daughter Mathilda to make them the richest princesses in Christendom, and to permit them to set large armies on foot against that detestable anti-pope Cadolaüs, who would, with the help of his schismatic confederates of Lombardy, have overthrown the holy Pope Alexander, our Bishop of Lucca. These brave women treated him so that they left him with no ambition to begin again. The Lombards advanced from Pavia, Milan, and Brescia, strongly supported by a body of German troops. They sought to force the passage, enter in safety with their anti-pope up the vast domains of Beatrice and Mathilda, then continue thus quietly on their road to Rome to dispossess the holy Pope Alexander; but when proud of their numbers and of their boldness, they proposed to pass the river Po, they found on its banks an obstacle which stopped them and cost them dear.

"One day the countess and myself were returning from the pass of Varvasone; her falcon had seized a tailless hawk, and, as the rogue made a show of resistance, the falcon seized him in such a way that he could not escape, now giving him a blow with his wing, or again with his beak, then throwing him up in the air and catching him again. He pecked at him so much that the feathers rained down upon us like snow-flakes, until at last, tired of playing with his ugly prey, the brave falcon gave him the final blow, and brought him, featherless and still palpitating, to the feet of his mistress. Mathilda looked at it with disgust, took it by one wing, and, turning it rapidly in the air, she cast it on the ground, saying, 'Ah! why art not thou that infamous Cadolaüs who hast the audacity to peck at the divine robe of the Church, and who would usurp the chair of Saint Peter, where Alexander, the chosen of God, sits and reigns? I swear to leave him neither rest nor peace till I see him fall, like that miserable bird, into the mud, from which he came forth only to be the plague of the world.' So said the heroic child, and turning to me her beautiful eyes, in which the fire of indignation still glowed, she added, 'Gunzone, thou shalt see me to-morrow in another habit than that of a huntress; take care of my falcons; I hope to be able before long to unhood them upon a nobler prey than that hideous and disgusting hawk.' Then placing her hand on the shoulder of Prando, her groom, she said to him, 'Thou wilt give my Spanish horse to the care of Rataldo, and thou wilt seek me with my Moorish horse saddled; see that he be groomed and bridled to-morrow at the dawn of day.' Prando bowed his head and answered, 'Your highness shall be obeyed.'

"Ye must know that this Moorish horse was that which the Countess used for tilting; when we would see her prancing on the green, handling the spear and brandishing the sword, we could not believe that it was a young damsel of fifteen years. By her form and development, she had more the air of a woman of twenty; and amongst all the maidens of her mother the Duchess, who often tilted with her, none could equal her in lightness, skill, and valor. Her horse obeyed her like a dog; she threw the dart, the hatchet, or the steel-pointed axe, and handled the lance or the sword like the first foot-soldier in Germany. While still very young, her father, the Marquis, put her in the saddle, and holding the bridle of the horse, let it go slowly, but she, in her impatience, seized the bridle in her little hands, and chirruped to make the horse go faster, trot, or even gallop, whilst her father was delighted at seeing her so fearlessly changing hands, taking half-steps, backward steps, wheeling about, guiding her horse with her little hands, and managing him beautifully."

"But," said Marculfe, "why did she order Prando to have her Arab steed in readiness? Did she want to tilt the day after she had been out with thee?"

"Yes, she did indeed want to tilt, and it was a rude tilt to which she was exposing herself, I assure thee—a tilt which was to dismount Cadolaüs and the flower of Lombard chivalry. I came back then to Canossa, and the next day I found the whole court in great agitation. The esquires of the Duchess Beatrice were bringing from the arsenal shields, bucklers, maces, halberds, lances, swords, hauberks, breast-plates, helmets, morions, and head-pieces of all forms. We were all surprised at these preparations, not knowing what was to be the result. All at once we saw coming down from the great tower the banner of the Count, escorted by a great number of knights, and going towards the Cathedral of Saint Appollonius. The Duchess Beatrice and the young Mathilda had already repaired thither; then the high-constable rested the staff of the standard on the ground, and Mathilda respectfully placed her steel-gloved hand upon it, waiting till the abbot and his monks had come out of the church, and blessed it in the name of God, and sprinkled it with holy water. That ceremony ended, the young Countess, raising the pendant, waved it in the air to show it to the crowd, crying: 'Long live Saint Peter! True warriors of Canossa! carry this noble banner to the very fields of Lombardy, and bring it back victorious. Fight valiantly in its shadow against the anti-pope Cadolaus and his unworthy followers, who dare to take up arms against the Church of Christ. From the highest heavens Saint Peter will guard and protect ye, that your arm may be strong, and that ye may defend his chair against the profanations of Antichrist. The gates of hell shall not prevail against ye, for ye have the glory of being the champions of the God of armies. If ye die, to ye the martyr's palm ; if ye triumph, to ye the confessor's crown. May the Archangel Saint Michael cover ye with his fiery shield ! May Saint Peter obtain remission for your sins and their penalty ! My mother, Beatrice, shall lead ye to victory, and I will fight with ye in the front rank.' At the noble young girl's fervent words, all those present brandished their arms, crying : 'Long live Saint Peter ! Long live Beatrice ! Long live Mathilda ! Death to Antichrist !'

"We were charmed with our young mistress's enthusiasm ; but what was our surprise when, on the following day, just as the troops were in their saddles ready to depart, we saw the Duchess, mounted on her finest horse—the most beautiful steed in her stables—come forth from the palace and appear on the grand square of Canossa, and behind her Mathilda herself on her Arab courser, and armed from head to foot like a real French knight. The royal damsel was as bright as the sun, so radiant and smiling was she under her coat of mail and helmet, the crest of which was of azure blue and white. Under her coat-of-arms she wore a very fine steel hauberk with gold nails, and on her breast a head of Saint Peter with the keys crosswise—the whole of burnished gold set high, and surrounded with ornaments of foliage of exquisite workmanship. Her other pieces of armor were small plates of steel engraved in the form of the scales of a fish, and embossed in wonderful fashion. The belt which fastened her sword was formed of twisted threads of gold, falling from the right shoulder to the left thigh, with so much grace that we were never tired of admiring it. The young lady advanced after her mother, surrounded by her esquires, and mounted on her favorite horse, which seemed proud to carry his beautiful mistress. He arched his neck, pricked his ears, and pawed the ground haughtily, under the cloth of azure-blue velvet which covered him. This cloth, studded with silver stars, came down to his legs behind, and was divided at the breast into four scallops garnished with costly fringe which fell to the knees; the curb and bit were of gold, and the head-piece of embossed steel, embellished, besides, with a rich plume of azure blue and white, like the crest of Mathilda.

"At the arrival of the two princesses, the high-constable raised the banner, and after having given the joyous war-cry, 'Long live Saint Peter!' the troops set out in good order, and took the road by the banks of the Po River, under the command of the two noble ladies. The vanguard of Cadolaüs awaited them, and the engagement commenced. The whole army of the Lombards pressed forward, but the knights of Canossa rushed upon them with such impetuosity and attacked the enemy's cavalry in front and rear with such firmness that they broke their lines and routed them in the first charge. Prando, who on that day followed the young Countess, told me that she performed prodigies of valor. First her lance broke against the breast of a gigantic Lombard, whom she unhorsed; then, seizing her sword, she threw herself like a young lioness into the very ranks of the enemy, cutting and thrusting, splitting helmets and morions till her blade broke on the breastplate of a German knight. She then threw the piece in his face with such violence that he tottered in his saddle, and finally fell backwards. At once having recourse to the battle-axe, which hung from her wrist by a light chain of steel, she began to lay about vigorously on helmets and head-pieces, bruising and breaking all that came under her hand.

"On beholding such a defeat, the impious Cadolaüs ignominiously fled with the flower of his warriors, and from that day to this he never dared to meddle with the troops of Canossa. That he might not be found within range of Mathilda's sword or axe! I swear to ye he will never again annoy the holy Pope Alexander, nor disturb the peace of holy Church."

Whilst the brave Gunzone was growing warm over the recital of the prowess of his mistress in her youth, the sound of a horn was heard echoing through the woods. The four falconers hastily arose, and they saw coming at full gallop one of the people of the palace, who told them to hold themselves in readiness, for that the noble Countess would soon reach the place, accompanied by the Marchioness Adelaide de Susa and by all the gentlemen of Italy and France who formed her court. Whilst old Gunzone hooded the falcons:

"Tell me, Silimbert," cried he, addressing the new-comer, "does the fair Yolande take part in the chase?"

"Of course. What does it matter to thee?"

"It concerns me much, for that damsel slips the falcon on the game with such address that I hold her the most adroit huntswoman of the court."

He finished abruptly, for they could already hear the neighing of the horses echoed from the outskirts of the forest.

CHAPTER II.

THE CASTLE OF CANOSSA.

THAT steep and almost perpendicular rock which arises stern and rugged above the valleys of the Apennines, somewhat south of the town of Reggio, is the rock of Canossa. On the east a bare and arid desert is overhung by frightful precipices whose depths the eye of the traveller cannot fathom. All is silence, ruin, gloom, and desolation in these cheerless regions. The rugged rocks seen from the opposite side seem like the funereal tents of the army of the dead. There the fresh murmur of waters is never heard; the limpid brook is silent; flowers and verdure are unknown on its banks; the warbling of birds is never echoed there; the song of the shepherd leading his flocks to the acorn pastures, nor that of the laborer as he drives the harrow over the ploughed field, never breaks the solemn silence of that spot, unshaded by the tufted evergreen or the green-leaved oak.

Yet the rock of Canossa attracts the eye of the traveller; it seems to tell him that earthly glory is frail and transient. In its mute language that rock presents to him a grand lesson: "Behold from my lofty summit the richest, most beautiful, and most sumptuous cities of Italy, and learn that I was once the cradle of nobility, of grandeur, and of knowledge. This was the birth-place of Italian civilization ; from here the world received its gentle manners, refinement, the fine arts, the language purified and harmonious, and elegant usages. Here it was that Italian valor was made manifest ; here broke forth the anger of the Lombards and the fury of the Germans."

The Castle of Canossa was built on this vast rock, in the year 900, by Azzo of Tuscany, who here gave an asylum to the Empress Adelaide, who escaped from the tower of La Garde, where Berenger had kept her prisoner. That prince laid siege to its walls, which resisted him for three years and a half ; for the castle was so well defended that he could never become master of it. Berenger, who had dared to give battle to Otho the Great, was afterwards made prisoner in his turn. Albert, his son, who succeeded him on the throne of Lombardy, also thought to possess himself of Canossa, but after a siege of ten years and three months he was forced to depart not only from this rich prey, but from his states and even from Italy, vanquished by the German army and by Duke Azzo.*

In those barbarous times, which, above all others, might justly be named the age of iron, civilization, letters, and the arts were unknown ; for strength alone took the place of right, fierceness replaced clemency, rudeness courtesy ; instead of generosity and Christian meekness there were only hatred, treason, and revenge.

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* Donizone, c. ii.

From the height of the rock of Canossa went forth the first rays of that civilization which afterwards shone throughout Italy. From his Alpine eyrie, which he had transformed into a brilliant court, Duke Azzo saw stretched at his feet the provinces of Lombardy and Venice, which brutality and barbarity still kept enveloped in their thick shadows. Towns flew at each other like so many wild beasts; they fell beneath the sword or the torch, or became the den of petty tyrants, who, from the summit of every mountain, in the depth of every valley, at the mouth of every river, on the slope of every hill, at the point of every rock, threw up fortresses, whence they made war on their neighbors or pillaged travellers.

What we have said of Lombardy and Venetia might be said with still more justice of Lower Italy, where the heat of the climate, contagious diseases, the violent temperaments, the heat of the blood, the wild regions of the Apennines, the fierceness of the wars, burnings, massacres, and sacking of the towns—more atrocious here than elsewhere—all rendered the inhabitants fiercer and wilder, being themselves victims of the fury of the Vandals, Goths, Lombards, and Saracens. Rome itself was but a mass of ruins, and its suburbs presented to the view only a desert covered with brambles, heather, and swamps; the doors were thrown open, the theatres partly destroyed, the monuments dilapidated, palaces devastated, temples abandoned, soiled, and stripped of their ornaments; the population, which had once exceeded four millions of souls in the time of the Roman Empire, was now so reduced as to be insufficient to fill a small market town. Besides this, the poor people were reduced to such scarcity of houses, thanks to civil war and sedition, that they fought for a shelter under the arches of the amphitheatres, under the domes of the curias and public monuments, in the ruins of peristyles and porticos, where they sought a lodging like the owl and the eagle. Tombs, mausoleums, and imperial palaces had been transformed into fortresses and bastiles, where bloody combats were carried on; these ruins became, in their turn, the scene of sieges, of assaults, of burnings; the popes were assassinated, the consuls were strangled, the patricians beheaded. Now they would have a Lombard prince for their tyrant, again, a Tuscan marquis or a count of Tusculum; and the Roman people, always at once cowardly and courageous, avaricious and generous, rebellious and submissive, fierce and magnanimous, must always have masters whom they obeyed, tyrants who made them tremble, popes whom they adored, whom they banished, and recalled with tears of repentance, and whom they revenged by murdering or exterminating those who had banished, afflicted, or humbled them. Such was the Rome of the tenth century; let the reader judge what it must have been!

To these misfortunes, occasioned by the gross manners, discord, and continual combats between city and city, castle and castle, we must add the total absence of commerce, which brings together neighboring peoples, and even those who are at a distance from each other; and thus the roads and means of communication became almost impassable, the rivers without bridges, the fields uncultivated by reason of the inundations and stagnant waters with which they were covered for want of canals and means of draining. Nor was this all; there being no harvests, the result was famine, want, and epidemics; the men, reduced to the last extremity, came to feed on acorns like unclean animals, to regale themselves on wild fruits, on game or fish which were taken in the weirs, in the pools, or in the ditches. To crown all these evils, the feudal lords overpowered the inhabitants of the countries which they ruled with taxes and imposts. They obliged them to supply their tables with the products which these unfortunate people procured by hunting or fishing. They forced them to carry burdens, to bear messages to distant countries, to furnish them with troops for war, to build the towers and walls of their feudal dwellings, reducing them at length to the offices of beasts of burden, and prevailing as much over their persons as they did over their goods by their exorbitant imposts.

It was indeed impossible that the fine arts should be cultivated in such a wild and savage state of life. Therefore sculpture, painting, designing in gold, weaving stuffs, building and working in metals, and statuary, were all unheeded. Everything was of coarse, rude workmanship; the usages of polite and polished society were unknown; virtue, generosity, justice, consisted in a solid helmet, a proven shield, a keen-edged sword, a ponderous battle-axe, a strong lance, sinewy arm, broad shoulders, a full and expansive chest. As for science and letters, they were so much despised that lords, princes, and kings boasted of knowing neither how to read nor write. Therefore, to sign their letters, their laws, and ordinances, they made use of a seal on which their name was engraved; they blackened this strange instrument with ink or with smoke, and impressed it at the bottom of their decrees. The cathedrals and curias, however, had notaries who were employed to draw up private as well as public documents; but they made use of such barbarous Latin and so full of solecisms that it is impossible to read them now without laughing.

The secular clergy also shared to some extent in the general ignorance. The greater number of priests could scarcely read their Office and Mass books; they were regarded as fountains of learning when, by chance, they could sign their name. To receive holy orders, it sufficed to know by heart the creed of Saint Athanasius. All their theological studies were included in this. The light of human and divine science and letters only shone in the cloisters of Saint Benedict, whence were drawn the popes, bishops, and prelates of the holy Church. Yet more, let us say in passing, if monasticism had not kept alive the heavenly spark of the torch of science, the present century would perhaps have been grosser and more ignorant than that of which we speak. Besides, in those barbarous times faith was strong; no heresy troubled the Christianity of the West, but the same religious belief was maintained with submission and respect; the end of the world was expected in the year 1000, when heaven and earth would return to nothing and Jesus Christ appear in the clouds to judge the living and the dead. Therefore, enshrouded in the darkness of such gross ignorance, men gave themselves up entirely to indolence and discouragement. They troubled themselves about nothing; took no pains to alleviate their misery, to cultivate the earth, to direct the course of rivers, to dry up swamps, and to repair churches and dwellings.

When we think of that unhappy epoch, we think ourselves the sport of a dream. It will be told that the physical was like the intellectual world, and that nature was plunged in material darkness. It would seem that the sun did not shine as it does in our days, that the moon veiled its silver disc, and the stars did not shine in the vault of heaven; the waters of the rivers became black, that of the lakes as red as blood, the sea troubled and muddy; the grass had a taint of mildew, and the fruits and flowers a sombre and sickly color. Thus does man reason when he is abandoned to his own imagination; he quickly associates the interior light of the mind with the exterior light of day. Therefore it is that, when he represents the darkness of the Middle Ages, he forces himself to believe that the exterior world was also in darkness; whilst in our days, which he regards as the epoch so brilliantly illuminated by the torch of science and the arts, he is ready to declare that the sun which lights it is warmer and more dazzling than that of the tenth century. What an error this is! We think, on the contrary, that if ignorance prevailed in the ages of barbarism—and we admit this—nature at least enjoyed all its rights. It is in our days that we see false science prevail—an error a thousand times more dangerous than ignorance; it is in our days that art takes the place of nature, art corrupts all simplicity, art which withers and blights all that it touches. To find once more that sacred nature it must be sought pure and virgin in those stern ages; for in ours it flies before that artificial society which has the sad faculty of corrupting all natural, civil, and domestic laws—society the more corroded by the poison of unbelief as the ignorance which enshrouds it is deeper and more shameful. But we must not allow ourselves to be led into treating of a subject which would furnish matter for volumes. We too hate the darkness, we too love the light; only we want it true and pure, such as it really is—that is to say, guiding the intelligence towards the truth, the heart towards good, and the entire man towards peace and happiness.

However, to refresh ourselves a little after the spectacle which the tenth century offers to us, let us return to Canossa—to Canossa, whence shone the first sparks of that civilization which was to save unhappy Italy and render it for ever illustrious.

Duke Azzo loved to draw to his castle the flower of the nobility of those times; the most beautiful ornament of his court was the gentle Hildegarde, his wife—a princess endowed with all graces and virtues, a woman of a cultivated mind, pious soul, and sound and acurate judgment.* It was through the advice of Hildegarde that Azzo erected on the banks of the Po the famous monastery of Bressello, which he enriched with so many revenues. He wished that the religious should teach the country-people how to build sound and commodious dwellings, to cultivate the earth, to dry up swamps, to erect dams at the turn of the rivers which threatened, at the spring tide, to submerge the hamlets and fields for a considerable space. Hildegarde and Azzo had two sons. The first, named Tedaldo, succeeded his father; the second became Bishop of Brescia under the name of Godfrey, which he had rendered illustrious. Alone amongst all the Italian princes of his time, Tedaldo, by his courage and prudence, was enabled to increase considerably the inheritance which his father had left him. He made himself loved and esteemed by the monarchs of France and Germany, and his zeal for the Holy See was so great that the popes gave him the fief of Ferrara. To such generosity and valor the Prince added such piety that he founded, beween the Po and Sirone, the celebrated Abbey of Saint Benedict, which gave birth to so many holy and learned persons. In consequence thereof the noble Mathilda conceived so great an affection for this venerable place that she chose the church to be her burial-place. Her mortal remains rested there for five centuries, until Pope Urban VIII. had them transported with great pomp to the Vatican, where they are laid amid the ashes of the sovereign pontiffs, near the altar of Saint Peter. And it was but just; for she had always shown herself a submissive daughter of the Holy See and its courageous protectress, besides being its most munificent benefactress, donating to it all the patrimony of which she was mistress. She owed to her ancestor Tedaldo the deep affection which she bore to the tiara, and from which she never departed.

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* Donizone, iii.

Tedaldo had for wife the gracious Guillia; his sons, three illustrious princes, were Tedaldo, Boniface, and Conrad. The latter—after having performed prodigies of valor against the haughty barons of Lombardy united in the battle of Coviolo, near Reggio—although a conqueror, was taken into the latter town, where he died from the effects of a wound which he had received in the battle. His two brothers bitterly mourned him. Tedaldo consecrated himself to the service of God, and distinguished himself by his pastoral virtues, and particularly by the heavenly purity with which he embellished his soul and body. After he had become Bishop of Arezzo, he fell dangerously ill and his life was despaired of. However, the young bishop soon recovered. His convalescence was hastened by the gentle influence of music; he was indebted for this to one of his dearest friends, Guido,* restorer of the true church music by the discovery which is owing to him of the keys, the tones, and one note. It was from the lessons and examples of Hildegarde, his grandmother, and Guillia, his mother, both women of lofty piety and elevated mind, that Tedaldo, born at the Castle of Canossa, had drawn the principles of virtue, of generosity, and courtesy which he so largely propagated in the heart of Tuscany. His example had also a strong influence on the already noble soul of the Countess Mathilda, his niece, who, amongst all the princesses of her time, was famous for her uprightness of heart and the lofty magnanimity of her sentiments. But Canossa, where Boniface was born of the brave and beautiful Guillia, was never more brilliant and magnificent than in the time of that noble and generous Prince, the first and most powerful of the Italian dukes. He embellished his castle, adorned it sumptuously, and made it the strongest fortress of his domains. And whilst Mantua was nothing more than a large village enclosed between its lake and the river Po, without walls, roads, or towers, having no other defence than a ditch and a miserable paling,† the superb Canossa became a metropolis, and the dwelling of Boniface and his court, every day increasing, and from the height of its rocks looking disdainfully on the vast plains of Italy stretched at her feet, and the noblest cities of that ancient land bowing before her, from Bologna to Verona, and from Piacenza to Ferrara. The whole of Tuscany, a part of Liguria, Umbria, the country of Piceno, paid homage to him, and his powerful sway extended to the gorges of the mountain of Ciminia, and even to Viterbo. Before and after the death of Tedaldo, proud barons, haughty and powerful lords, had sworn faith and fidelity to Boniface; kings, and even emperors, had sought his alliance and treated with him as equal with equal; nevertheless this prince, an example of moderation, would never take any other title than that of marquis—the title which is preserved to-day in Verona among the illustrious family of Canossa, which seems to have truly inherited, with the nobility of its ancestors, their lofty piety and their courtesy. Just as the illustrious Boniface received in his castle kings and emperors, so the present Marquis Boniface of Canossa has received in his admirable palace of Verona the most powerful monarchs of Europe.

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* Guido d'Arezzo, a religious of the Abbey of Pomposa, found the *si*, the seventh note of the gamut. There is still to be seen at Arezzo, his native town, the site of his dwelling; a gigantic staff of music, decorated with a keynote and an enormous *si*, marks the spot where stood the cell of this celebrated musician.

† Donizone, xvi.

This palace, the masterpiece of the most skilful architect of the sixteenth century, of Sammichelli, is just on the banks of the Adige, which runs deep and rapid at its feet; the arched buttresses of its delightful terraces, from which there is a view of the windings of the river, of the verdant fields, the flowering gardens which surround and perfume the smiling villas of the hills of Saint Leonard;

then, in the far-off distance, the bluish summits of the lofty Alps mingle with the azure of the heavens; spacious halls, gilded panelling, costly pictures, endless galleries, make the traveller believe that he is in a royal dwelling rather than that of a private individual. The three greatest emperors of our century stopped there: the conquering Napoleon, Francis I. of Austria, and the Czar Alexander II., autocrat of all the Russias. The latter had such an affection for this delightful spot that he would often interrupt his repast, commenced in the interior of the palace, to go and finish it in one of the terraces. He would remain standing, his plate in his hand, and, whilst eating, would satiate his eyes with the magnificent views, so gracious and so varied, which are presented from the height of this belvedere. Received with such courtesy and magnificence, the three emperors retained a most affectionate remembrance of the Marquis Boniface; again, in our own days, the young sovereign of Austria honored the old age of the venerable gentleman, one of the noblest representatives of the old Italian nobility.*

To return to the generous Boniface, son of Tedaldo I., he found in his father's chamber twelve buckskin sacks filled with gold. This treasure was employed in embellishing and fortifying the palace of Canossa, in hospitality to princes who came thither to visit him, in enlarging the castles, parks, arsenals, falconries, villas, which he possessed in the neighborhood. He at once fortified and adorned the impregnable fortresses of Bianello, Rossena, and of Nogara, which overlooks Verona, and of Sorbara, which protects Modena. He was unsurpassed in liberality, and none knew better than he how to protect the arts in those rude times and give patronage to learned men, whom he attracted, at great cost, to his court, and to communicate their knowledge and enlightenment to his daughter, the young Mathilda, whose mother was Beatrice of France, the heiress of Frederic, Duke of Lotharingia, and grand-niece of the King Hugh Capet.

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* Other reliable authors declare that the present family of the Marquis of Canossa are lineally descended from the powerful Azzo, the father of Tedaldo, grandfather of Boniface, and great-grandfather of the Countess Mathilda. This family still possesses great estates in the Mantuan country and in the territory of Verona. The tall, black horses which are brought from these countries are much prized.

But Boniface was distinguished amongst all the princes of Christendom not only for his loyalty and magnificence, he was also admired for his courage and valor, unequalled in Italy. He was a head above the tallest warriors of the time, and left them also far behind him in strength and daring in the combat.* He proved it in the assault which was made on the city of Parma, December 25, 1037, by the Emperor Conrad. That Prince, having been repulsed in a sortie which the rebellious Parmesans had made against him, called the renowned Marquis to his aid. Boniface advanced at the head of his troops, gave battle to the rebels, routed them by prodigies of valor, and pursued them so closely that he entered with the fugitives, he the conqueror, into the town, and subdued it once more to the power of Conrad.

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* Donizone, vii.

His exploits in Burgundy were no less brilliant: it was in an attempt to subdue the town of Morat to subjection to the same prince. Conrad had established his army before the walls of this impregnable place; several assaults were made, but in vain, for the Burgundians defended themselves vigorously. The Emperor was so enraged at the futility of his efforts that he would rather have fallen in the combat than see his rebel subjects hold out against him with such boldness. Therefore, having abandoned all hope of overcoming them, he sent to beg Boniface to come to his assistance at the head of his Lombards; and he hastened thither. However, he would not enter the imperial camp with his troops; he held them apart and said to the Emperor: "Sire, if thou wouldst that I succeed, depart from here with thy soldiers, and retire beyond the river Sorino. I pledge myself to reduce the town with my people." Conrad acknowledged the truth of his words, and withdrew.

Then the Marquis divided and disposed his troops in battalions, and animated them for the combat. At sight of the Emperor raising his camp and departing from their walls, the Burgundians, intoxicated with joy, came out on the ramparts to forage; but perceiving the Marquis of Canossa and his Lombards, they flattered themselves that they could surround them and take possession of the spoils. They immediately began the action in great disorder. Boniface, hastening still more the combat, at once had the trumpets sounded, and his whole camp was under arms in a moment. He attacked the Burgundians at the head and flank at the same time and with such impetuosity that they could not resist the shock, but were routed at once. The terrible knight fought unremittingly; he broke helmets, pierced breastplates, split shields, and overthrew knights. In the fearful shock of the two armies, the Burgundians, trampled under the horses' feet, pierced with darts and arrows, pursued at the point of the sword and lance, yielded to fear and took to flight, seeking shelter within their walls. Boniface followed their footsteps, forced his way with them into the city, of which he took possession, and gave it up to his soldiers, after having caused the standard of Camera to be hoisted over all the towers. He then sent the keys of the gates to Conrad, who re-entered Morat in triumph, whilst the Marquis quietly returned to Italy and to the bosom of his dear Canossa, where he lived many long years as the richest, the most powerful prince of the West, held in great esteem even by the sovereigns.

After the death of Boniface, Beatrice, his wife, a woman of elevated genius and great prudence, governed the states with her daughter Mathilda, and brought them to such a high degree of prosperity that she was enabled to sustain long and bloody wars against Henry IV., Emperor of Germany, who had dared to attack Pope Alexander II. and raise up against him the anti-pope Cadolaüs.

Beatrice herself took command of her armies, followed everywhere by her daughter Mathilda, who, fully armed and mounted on a fiery steed, did not fear to attack the Lombard barons, the upholders of the anti-pope, often vanquished them, and, to their confusion, forced them to ask mercy under her sword or battle-axe. But when peace had brought back the two princesses to their castle of Canossa, which favored spot shone with renewed lustre, from all the countries of Europe came princes and gentlemen whose importance increased the splendor of that brilliant court, whilst the flower of the prelates of the Holy Church adorned it still more with their piety and the wisdom of their counsels. Meanwhile, after having accomplished her illustrious designs, the Duchess Beatrice died at Pisa, and was buried with great pomp, leaving to Mathilda, with her vast domains, a treasure still more precious—that of her virtues, her piety, and her devotion to the Church; of her filial attachment to the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ; and of that unbounded love of justice which afterwards made that princess the most celebrated woman whom Italy honors.

The digression which we have made is not useless. It presents a short picture of the barbarism, ignorance, and grossness which prevailed during the centuries which preceded the birth of Mathilda. We have seen how the first germs of Italian civilization manifested themselves in the house of Canossa under the government of Azzo. These germs produced some flowers under Tedaldo, and

Boniface had the glory of multiplying them. The wise government of Beatrice brought forth some fruits, and Mathilda might at length boast of having brought to their maturity the harvest of elevated intelligence and unparalleled genius which made Italy, in the thirteenth century, the first among nations in wisdom, valor, and civilization.

At Canossa broke the dawn of Italian courtesy, which, like another sun, was to disperse the darkness of Western barbarity and illumine Europe with that light with which in our own days it is still radiant. It may be justly said that Canossa was, for the year 1000, the favored cradle of politeness and good manners, a shelter for virtuous men persecuted by the tyrants of Italy, the munificent refuge of the fine arts as they began to come forth from their former rudeness, the school where princes came, under the eye of Mathilda and her court, to form themselves to the noble usages of chivalry, to fervent piety, to the exercise of virtue, to serious studies, to polite customs, to all that makes the charm of life, to ease of manner, to politeness, to benevolence—in a word, to all that adorns and enlarges the spirit and the heart by raising them up to the most noble and holy enterprises. In fact, the court of Mathilda was the mirror of all the virtues, the seat of the most heroic piety, of the firmness of Christian constancy in venerating and defending the despoiled Church, humiliated, oppressed by the most cruel persecutions that had ever risen against her.

At the time when our story opens the holy Pope

Gregory VII. had just left Rome to cross Lombardy and the Alps and go to Augsburg, where the Diet of German princes was to assemble at Candlemas. They were convoked in order to discuss, in presence of his Holiness and of all Germany, in the person of its representatives, the cause of the Emperor Henry IV., a rebel to the Church and a tyrant to his subjects. When the Italian nobility learned that the Pope had begun his journey, they were filled with emulation, and its principal members invited the Pope to deign to rest in those of their castles which came on his way, and to take up his lodging therein. The Countess Mathilda again signalized herself amongst all others on this occasion. She sent some of her feudal barons to meet and to salute the Holy Father in her name as soon as he had entered Tuscany. He found at the frontiers a body of knights who were appointed, on the part of their sovereign, to serve him as an escort of honor, or, at need, of defence, to the walls of Canossa.

As soon as they had learned the Pope's design of sojourning with the Countess, in spite of the severity of the season, the snow which obstructed the mountain-gorges, the roads broken and covered with ice, the greatest lords of Burgundy, of France, and Italy were seen hastening to Canossa to kiss the Pope's feet and receive his benediction.* In their ranks were numbered Azzo d'Este, Marquis of Ferrara, Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, and Adelaide of Susa, accompanied by the Count Amédée de Maurienne, her son.[*] The Marchionness of Susa added much by her presence to the brilliancy of the court of Canossa. She was one of the most illustrious princesses of Italy; and it was to the immense inheritance of her domains, which she brought to the house of Savoy, that that family owed the preponderance which they already began to enjoy on this side of the Alps. Mathilda hastened to receive this noble visitor, as also the many gentlemen who came to her court to admire the mind and the sense of these two remarkable women, the pride of Italy. The splendor of this assembly was so great that it equalled the pomp of the richest monarchs of Christendom, and far surpassed them in all that regards elevation of mind, elegance of manners, delicacy of speech, artistic and even scientific discoveries; while over the rest of Europe, and especially beyond the mountains, still lay the darkness of semi-barbarism. Amongst the amusements offered to the noble guests, that of hunting with the falcon was the most enjoyed. The noblest ladies themselves took part in it; they might be seen, mounted on swift coursers, flying along the banks of lakes, streams, and rivers which were the places most frequented by cranes, wild geese, herons, and other water-fowl. On that day the banks of the Enza furnished an abundant chase. The four falconers, Gunzone, Marculfe, Vidbode, and Goldasto, were loaded with praise from the Countess Mathilda, the Marchioness de

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* Donizone, i., ii.

[†] **Muratori, Notes on Donizone.**

Susa, and many of the lords. All had been successful that day, and, coming to lay at the feet of the two princesses the fruits of their skill, each one related the exploits of his falcons, their ways of attacking their prey, the latter's stratagems to escape, and the triumph of the noble bird. Amongst all, the most fortunate and most skilful, the one who bore off the honors of the day, was the beautiful and modest Yoland. Everywhere accompanied by old Gunzone, she let go her hawk with such directness that he never failed to bring back some game to the neck of the white Spanish pony which she rode. Hence she brought that day to the Countess two herons, three plovers, one wild goose, one eagle, one crane, and five young ducks. Everybody admired the skill of the young girl, and proclaimed her the most skilful huntress of the day. Meanwhile, the young lords were asking each other who was that timid and charming young person. A young German prince made himself remarkable amongst all others by the unequivocal expressions of admiration which escaped him at the sight of all her exploits.

Yoland wore a riding-dress of amaranth velvet with gold stripes, closed at the waist with pearl buttons; she wore a hat of colored satin worked with silver, surmounted by a long white feather, which fell waving to her shoulder. On returning from the chase she followed the Countess Mathilda; at her left rode the Marquis de Ceva, at her right the young German of whom we have spoken, and who scarcely dared address a word to her, so absorbed was he in admiration of her.

CHAPTER III.

YOLAND DE GRONINGEN.

On St. Lucy's night in December, the Countess, after having, according to the custom of the time, made rich and numerous presents to both the knights of her own court and the foreign lords and gentlemen who had come thither from France, Burgundy, England, Lombardy, and Tuscany, on the occasion of the expected arrival of the Pope, had left them in the great hall of the castle, seeking to pass the long winter evening by games and pleasant discourse. At the same time, and in that part of the castle which looked out upon the inner courts, the ladies of the two princesses were assembled, and were also spending the evening in dance and song, enlivened by the sound of instruments and cheerful conversation. Mathilda and Adelaide de Susa, in another apartment, were discussing the deplorable condition in which the Emperor had placed himself by his perfidy towards the Church and his cruelty towards the Saxons and the other provinces of the empire, which he had pitilessly oppressed. In consequence of this the electors and the German princes, assembled at Oppenheim, had signified to Henry IV. that if, at the end of a year, he had not made his submission to the Church of God and sworn to govern Germany with justice and humanity, they would depose him and choose another emperor. Meantime, they had entreated the Pope to come to Augsburg, about Candlemas, to hear in person the just complaints of an oppressed nation, and, in his high wisdom, to pronounce a sentence which should be without appeal.

Whilst the two princesses amused themselves by conversing on the sanctity and the firmness of Gregory, who, from the pure love of good, did not hesitate to undertake a long and painful journey in such a severe season, and notwithstanding his bad health—enfeebled much more by cares and anxieties than age—the mournful sound of an instrument in an adjoining apartment attracted their attention. The chamber in which they were was the most remote and isolated in the castle, and consequently very far from the halls where the young lords and courtiers were spending the time in boisterous gaiety. The two friends suspended their discourse, and listened to the harmony which thus broke in upon the stillness of the night. A light and delicate hand was sweeping the low chords of a harp, whose sweet and plaintive sounds accompanied a song of unutterable sadness: the voice, clear, silvery, and tremulous, sank to the most mournful notes, and gave them a sorrowful and touching expression which went to the heart and filled it with compassion.

"Ah! what crushing sorrows
My early youth have marred!

Exile and long absence,
Alas ! I feel how hard.

"From my first fair springtime
Stern sorrow was my lot,
And though I am but twenty,
Ill fortune spared me not.

"Dear Magdeburg, farewell ;
Thy proud keep's imag'd e'er
Within the Elbe, which sighs
At leaving shores so fair.

"I hear in all around
I shall never more see thee.
O vain, O wild regrets !
No country now for me.

"What joy, what bliss it were
Thy sky and wave to see,
Within the shadow of thy walls
How happy could I be.

"We must henceforth forget
Groningen's much-loved shore :
The daughter of Pandolph
Shall see it nevermore."

And the last quiver of the harp-strings seemed, under the touch of the singer, to repeat mournfully: "Nevermore, nevermore!" At these last words, lost in a sigh which breathed of the piety and resignation of a soul who has placed her sorrows and her hopes in God alone, the Marchioness Adelaide was moved to tears, and turning to her companion:

"My friend," said she, "who is it that sings with so much grace and expression?"

"It is my dear Yoland," replied Mathilda.

"What! that beautiful young girl who showed such skill the other day in hunting with the falcon? She seemed to me very much gifted by nature, for, in addition to the grace and elegance of her manner, she shows a modesty which doubly enhances their value, concealing them under an air of timidity and reserve which is most charming. The maidens of my suite are quite taken with her, and talk of nothing else. According to them, this young girl is the most accomplished of all those of thy court, which, however, includes a great number, and many of great merit. To tell the truth, I am under the spell myself, for from the gallery of thy chapel I admire the fervor and piety of thy beautiful Yoland: wouldst thou believe that her attitude and her exterior inspire me with devotion? The Marquis of Saluzzo and the Count Raconigi have often spoken of her to the Bishop of Reggio, my Lord of Modena, and to the Count of Parma, but none of them could satisfy their curiosity. They merely replied that she had come from Mantua, and were silent as to all the rest: they, however, agreed on one thing, that, judging by the dignity and distinction of her bearing, she must be of high birth. Tell me, I pray thee, is she Italian, or was she born in thy possessions in Lotharingia?

"No, dear Adelaide. Yoland is from Upper Germany, but I keep her origin secret for important reasons, which I may however confide to thy prudence. My poor Yoland is of high birth: her father the Count de Groningen, and her mother a daughter of the Landgrave of Hesse, a noble-hearted lady, and devoted beyond measure to her husband. Count Pandolph, a wise and prudent man, governed his states mildly and justly, and his people lived in peace, till the melancholy days of the Anti-Pope Cadolaüs—raised up doubtless by hell as a brand of discord, enkindled in the bosom of God's Church to disturb and devastate it. Pandolph, a truly Catholic prince, embraced the cause of justice, that is to say, that of Pope Alexander II. of holy memory, and all his subjects followed his example. This conduct was so much the more praiseworthy that attachment to the Chair of Saint Peter was not a common virtue, and that many of the highest barons of Germany espoused the cause of the Anti-Pope, to obtain the good graces of the young Emperor.

"The Marquis of Brandenburg, a man entirely devoted to the imperial party, declared to the Count that he must abandon the interests of Pope Alexander, and espouse that of Cadolaüs. Pandolph refused, and the Brandenburgians immediately marched against him at the head of a powerful body of cavalry and infantry. The noble Count collected all his forces, wishing to meet him half-way; he crossed the Elbe, and went in search of the enemy as far as Camink, so as to open the engagement on the very territory of his adversary. The combat was lively. Pandolph, rushing in among the Brandenburgian knights, routed them, and victory seemed about to declare for him, when Count Dessau, suddenly rushing out of an ambush, attacked their flank, and cut to pieces the body of

Groningen cavalry; and their commander, surrounded on all sides, and, besides, wounded and thrown from his horse, was taken prisoner, whilst the rest of his people were forced to retreat in great disorder.

"Adeltrude, Pandolph's wife, thought she would die of grief when, on the return of his troops, defeated, terrified, and seeking an asylum under the walls of Groningen, she saw that her husband was not among their ranks. She questioned every soldier; none of them could tell her what had become of the Count. Inspired by her conjugal love, she addressed herself to Guinigise, Pandolph's younger brother, a generous and upright young man: 'Let us go,' said she to him, 'let us go and seek him ourselves on the field of battle.' Next day, at dawn, they set out, crossed the Elbe in a frail bark, and at sunset reached the field on which the battle had been fought. They at first perceived the traces of the encounter between the Brandenburgians and the Count and his warriors; then they reached the place of ambush, they recognized the corpses of their soldiers with which the ground was strewn. With firm step, Adeltrude went from one to the other, raising the visor of their helmets, examining the features of each, admiring in her heart the heroic defence which they had made to save their lord, till at length they recognized the leopard which had been the crest of Pandolph's helmet, and the feathers which adorned it; these feathers were bruised and bloody, but, alas! of the Count there was no trace.

"Almost heart-broken, she entered all the dwellings in the neighborhood, even the humblest; barns, stables, and coach-houses, no place escaped her search; she questioned the peasants who had hastened to the field of battle to strip the dead. She even ventured to slip into the Castle of Camink, penetrated to the hospital where the wounded were lodged, going from one to another, studying their faces, until she at length recognized amongst them a young knight from Groningen, whom she asked for tidings of the Count. The young man was mortally wounded in the back by a lance. He, however, turned to the Countess, and said to her in a broken voice: 'My noble master had already conquered when the traitor Dessau attacked him from behind, wounded him, threw him from his horse, and, in spite of his heroic resistance, made him prisoner. He has doubtless been transported to the Castle of Brandenburg; but thou, my lady, what dost thou here? Thou wouldst be a victim to thine affection if thou wert recognized; thou wouldst be given up to the Marquis of Brandenburg, that enemy of our holy Church. But, I pray thee, be pleased to tell my mother to find consolation for my death, in that I received it in defence of the true Vicar of Christ and the Count Pandolph, my beloved lord.'

"Overcome by these sad tidings, the Countess returned to Groningen, where she learned that her husband had been taken, well guarded, to the Monastery of Potsdam, there to recover from his wound, under the care of the holy monks of that place; for thou knowest, dear Adelaide, that in our times only religious understand medicine or possess drugs. Adeltrude sent ambassadors to Brandenburg. They were commissioned to negotiate for peace and the Count's ransom, but the pitiless victor refused all terms, and swore that he would let Pandolph die of hunger and misery in a cell if he would not agree to support the pretensions of Cadolaüs. Inspired by her love, Adeltrude conceived a noble plan. She sent for Guinigise, her brother-in-law, opened her heart to him, confided the government of her states to the prudence of the young Prince, then, cutting off her beautiful hair, and taking with her most of her jewels, she put on male attire, and left Groningen one dark night, taking the road to Potsdam.

"As soon as she reached the monastery, she presented herself to the Abbot as an hospital nurse, passing herself off for a young man from Altenburg in Austria, and declaring herself skilful in the care of the sick. The Abbot, deceived as to her sex, and as she seemed to be a discreet and honest youth, made no objection to admitting her among the attendants of the house. Adeltrude demeaned herself so well towards the religious and the sick, and showed such sweetness and humility, that she soon made herself beloved by every one. Without seeming to recognize the Count, she took care of all the sick with great zeal, arranging their beds, making everything clean and orderly, distributing to each the prescribed remedies, always silent, modest, recollected, and ready to do everything for every one. However, when she saw that the Count's wounds were nearly healed, she approached Pandolph's bed one night, when every one in the monastery was asleep, made herself known, embraced him tenderly, and revealed to him the plan which she had conceived for his deliverance.

"Whilst fulfilling her duties in the convent, she had observed the means of entrance, the means by which her husband might be set at liberty without any one knowing how he had escaped. The monastery is surrounded by walls and towers, under which is a large moat, to protect the sacred asylum from the too frequent incursions of the Preteni.* It could only be crossed by a drawbridge, which was lowered at sunset, and never raised again till sunrise. Opposite the cloisters there was, however, a little wood, skirted by a fringe of larch trees, overhung by a rock, at the foot of which flowed the river Harvel, broader and deeper here than at any other place. Adeltrude carefully examined this rock, to discover some path, or at least some rugged places, by means of which a descent might be made into the abyss. Vain hope, useless search; it would require wings to escape. Her love had made her daring, her love now made her ingenious.

"Before leaving Groningen, she had an understanding with her brother-in-law, Guinigise. He was to send to her Fredolph, an old and faithful servant of her house. Disguised under the rags of a beggar, he had only to stand before the door of the monastery feigning to ask alms. All had succeeded, and Adeltrude, in bringing the old man his scanty pittance every morning, gave him news of herself and of her husband. She was thus enabled to communicate to him her plan of flight, and to send word to Guinigise to obtain for her, as soon as possible, a ladder of silk a hundred fathoms long, then to arrange everything so that a boat would be at the foot of the rock in question, at the spot which was shaded by an aged oak ; she also told him the precise night and hour which she had fixed for the execution of her plan. Meanwhile, Pandolph was able to leave his bed. On the appointed night Adeltrude, profiting by the deep slumber in which the whole monastery was sunk, awoke her husband, went out softly with him, crossed the little wood in the direction of the larch trees before-mentioned. There she drew from a sack the precious ladder which Fredolph had secretly brought her, fastened it to the foot of the oak, then, after having clasped her husband in her arms, she made him descend, saying : 'Await me at the fountain of Teltow, where I shall rejoin thee at noon.' At the appointed signal the boat came close to the rock, Pandolph got in it, Adeltrude unfastened the ladder, threw it to the boatman, and by a few strokes of the oar the fugitive was on the other bank.

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* The Prussians of our day, then a fierce and savage people.

"The following day, as soon as the drawbridge was lowered, the brave Countess, pretending that she had to go out on business for the convent, left the monastery and went to Potsdam. She soon reached the river and crossed ; at a little distance from the shore was one of the grooms of Guinigise, holding a horse already saddled, who awaited her, as another one had likewise awaited Pandolph on the previous night. Adeltrude was at the fountain, where her husband was waiting for her, before the appointed hour. To send back the two grooms to Groningen, and to fly in all haste by the cross-road, was what prudence demanded, for the Marquis of Brandenburg would not fail to pursue the fugitives. They did not stop till they reached the frontiers of Bohemia, and were at first resolved to remain at Pilsen; but having learned that the Marquis, furious at their flight, had sent emissaries in all directions to seize upon them, they thought themselves scarcely secure in that town, and decided to cross the Moldau and take refuge in Moravia. They arrived there, passing themselves off for poor citizens from Austria, and settled in the town of Zenaim, where, by their humble and retired life, they turned all attention from them, and could wait in safety till better days would permit them to return to their states.

"Soon after this, God gave our dear Yoland to the Countess. You can imagine the joy of Adeltrude, and what a consolation Pandolph found this child in the sorrows of his exile. However, Henry IV., the young Emperor, although educated by the care of Hatton de Cologne, who had taken him from the guardianship of the Empress Agnes, his mother, had fallen since his childhood into the hands of base men, vile courtiers, who, in order to rule him more easily, and to attain their guilty end, allowed him to give himself up to his passions. From that time his young heart, already corrupted, cherished feelings of hostility towards the holy Church and its pastors. He began openly to brave Pope Alexander; and as most of the German princes had allowed themselves to be led into recognizing the Anti-Pope to please the emperor, Count Pandolph found it impossible to make any terms with the enemies of the Holy See, and had no other resource than to remain prudently concealed in Moravia.

"Yoland, a beautiful and graceful child, had just attained the first bloom of youth. Her father wished that she should be educated in a noble and Christian manner, and to accomplish this he placed her in the hands of the pious ladies whose convent is situated on a smiling hill not far from the city of Brunn. The abbess that directed it was a noble woman of mature age, a sister of the Landgrave of Thuringia, and celebrated throughout Moravia for her great wisdom and holiness. More than a hundred religious, from Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland, dwelt there under her mild rule, and were formed to virtue even more by her example than by her words. Theotberga, as the abbess was named, soon became attached to this child, who was remarkable for her gentleness, sweetness, and docility amongst all the young girls who, within the convent, were being trained to piety and the practice of all virtues. Pandolph and Adeltrude, who always passed, in the eyes of the abbess, for simple townspeople, often came to see their daughter at the convent. But they could not so well disguise their noble and easy manners, nor change the elegance of their language, nor obscure the clearness of their judgment, nor conceal the dignity and nobility of their persons, but that the abbess, a woman of a clear and penetrating eye, guessed to some extent that these were people of high rank under their apparent and borrowed simplicity. Her suspicions were increased when Yoland, come to the age of reason, began to receive from the lips of Adeltrude, her mother, earnest counsels, and exhortations to profit well by the studies she was making, and which were however only necessary to a young girl of high rank. Often, too, the pretended citizen's wife, clasping her child passionately in her arms, would say to her: 'My beloved Yoland, form thyself to virtue and prepare thyself for better days. God tries us, indeed, but he is our Father, and his justice will not make him forget his mercy; be always good, and fortify thy heart with hope and strength.'

"Theotberga took note of these words, and besides, she read in the mother's eyes more than her lips expressed. All tended to enlighten the abbess—her pale face, oppressed breath, the sigh which escaped from the trouble of the Countess' soul, often betrayed the mystery of her heart. One day when Pandolph had come to see his daughter, he said to Theotberga as he was about taking leave of her: 'Madame and Reverend Mother, although I am but a poor citizen, I venture to beg of thee that thou wilt have the kindness to have Yolande taught to play the harp and the lute, and to train her voice thoroughly, and even to teach her to dance and ride on horseback.'

"'I shall conform to thy wishes,' replied Theotberga, 'but I think it prudent to make a simple observation to thee; it is, that music, singing, dancing, and riding are only suitable for the daughters of marquises, counts, and the great vassals of the crown. Persons of thy condition are usually content to have their children taught to read the Psalms and the lives of the virgins and martyrs. There are no young girls, unless they have at least a barony, who ever desire to receive any more than this amount of education.

"'Reverend Mother,' replied Pandolph, 'thou art right, but every man has his plans, and I, in spite of the obscure rank in which thou seest me, have had in regard to my daughter and her birth predictions which I cannot treat lightly. One day I was passing through a gloomy forest, when a terrible storm surprised me; rain and hail fell in torrents; thunder rolled, lightning flashed and rent the heavens; the raging elements, the darkness of the forest, the wind bending and breaking the strongest trees, all combined to increase my alarm, and I spurred my horse not knowing what I was doing nor where I was going. All at once I perceived a bright light through the tufted foliage. I went towards it, and I soon found myself in the midst of an enclosure of steep and arid rocks, amongst which opened a deep grotto, whence came the light which had attracted me; to dismount from my horse, fasten it to the trunk of a dead tree, and enter the cavern in all haste, was the affair of a moment. A long narrow passage like the corridor of a cloister led me to a fire, beside which I saw no one; however, I approached, and began to dry my garments, drenched with rain. I could then perceive that the cave ran off into two branches, one of which was to the left, the other to the right, but these openings were so long and so low that the eye was soon lost in the darkness. The silence and solitude which here reigned increased still more the alarm which the tempest had awakened in my mind. Whose hand had enkindled this fire? Who was the inhabitant of this cavern? The idea that outlaws, coiners, or bandits, perhaps, made this their retreat, forced me to keep on my guard, and the more so that, all at once, slow heavy steps resounded from the passage on the right. I tried to penetrate the darkness which enshrouded it, and it seemed to me that a dark figure was slowly approaching! At this sight my heart beat and my hair stood on end. "God guard thee, Pandolph," said a deep voice, and I discovered an old man who, coming into the circle of the light, showed me a pale and emaciated face, which long white hair and a snowy beard rendered still more venerable. "Cease to fear, Pandolph," continued the apparition; "at the approach of the storm which threatened thee, I lit this fire, to serve thee as a guide, and to warm thy stiffened limbs. Give me thy hand!" Without knowing what I did I gave it to him, and whilst he held it in his long thin fingers, he looked at me fixedly and attentively. "Listen, Pandolph," resumed he at length; "thou hast become a father a short time since. The eyes of thy Yoland, now so weak, shall one day become bright and full of fire.

They shall see fourteen times twelve moons, then two moons more, then two moons and a half, and a Moravian Prince shall solicit the honor of her hand; but that Prince shall see but once those limpid eyes; it shall be the Landgrave who shall merit the hand of thy Yoland. Pandolph, preserve thy child with care for the destiny which awaits her." This he said; then, letting go my hand, with the end of a long stick which supported his steps, he stirred the fire and sent out a shower of sparks. "Count them, if thou canst, O Pandolph!" cried he in a piercing voice. "As many as the sparks which have flown from the bosom of that fire so many are the misfortunes which shall burst upon the head of thy Yoland; but fear not, God shall draw her from all these perils, and shall turn them to the greater happiness of thy child." Such, Reverend Mother, were the words of this old man, whom some have told me was a skilful magician, and others, with more truth, declare to be a holy hermit, who, for thirty years, has buried himself alive in that cavern. And this is why, madame, I beseech thee to protect my Yoland.'

"The Abbess took careful note of the mysterious words of Pandolph, who, whilst keeping from the holy woman what was her origin, yet wished to make known the prediction of the solitary touching his daughter."

"But," asked the Marchioness de Susa, "dost thou believe, Mathilda, that all that was true? Was it not rather a stratagem of Pandolph to conceal from the Abbess his high rank of sovereign count, whilst inducing her, by means of a feigned prophecy, to educate his child like a princess, which she really was by birth ?"

"As for me," replied the Countess, "I believe all that to be certain. Events have in all respects fulfilled the predictions of the holy hermit. It was not by magic, but indeed by a divine revelation, that he read the future of this young girl, in such manner as to be mistaken in nothing."

"Poor Yoland has then suffered a great deal. Poor child, my heart bleeds for her : she seems to me so worthy of a milder fate. I now understand the sorrowful meaning of her lay. But, tell me, Countess, is she still in danger ? Can she have anything to fear under thy hospitable roof with thee who lovest her as a daughter ? Thou seemest not to treat her like the other maidens of thy court, and all, even to the most honored ladies of the palace, yield to her the first place ; besides, thou dost admit her to thy table with the princes whom thou dost there receive."

"My friend," answered the Countess, "I do not love nor esteem her any more than she deserves, not only from her noble lineage, but from her candor, grace, and the nobility and excellence of her soul, adorned with every virtue. When thou hast heard the sad story of the misfortunes which her marvellous beauty and the perverse designs of an infatuated man drew upon her, thy pity, I am sure, will mingle with indignation. If the Holy Mother of God and her good angel had not protected and sustained her in a visible manner, it would have been impossible for her to have escaped so many pitfalls, to avoid so many snares, to struggle against so many obstacles, and to come victorious from the midst of so many perplexities. The firmness, good sense, and prudence of this young woman will seem to thee the more astonishing that thou shalt see her frequently deprived of all human counsel and support. Often when, having retired with me to the solitude of my own apartment, she would sing, accompanying herself on the lute, and seeing her sweet and noble face, I was filled with tenderness, and asked myself how such a beautiful creature could sustain such cruel misfortunes, and how so much strength could dwell in her soul, as simple and pure as a dove. Then, yielding to the impulse of my heart, I would cast myself upon her neck and embrace her, whilst she wept in my arms, calling me her mother and returning my caresses."

Adelaide de Susa, touched by the words of the Countess Mathilda, prayed her to relate the misfortunes of Yoland. The Countess consented, and that story, commenced that very evening, occupied them both during several of the succeeding mornings. We shall relate it in the following chapters, and the reader can be assured of their truth by glancing over the old chronicles of Groningen.

CHAPTER IV.

OTTOCAR DE BRUNN.

Reflecting on the words of Pandolph, the abbess came to the conclusion that he was not what he seemed to be, and that he was rather a man of rank, who, for secret and legitimate reasons, was forced to disguise himself under this coarse garb. She therefore applied herself to give Yoland such an education that her pupil might be fitted to ascend a throne, if Heaven should call her to it. By acting thus Theotberga displayed her prudence; she knew the times to be troublous and disturbed in Germany, and even throughout Western Christendom, in consequence of the civil discord which the imperial ambition had stirred up everywhere. The German lords were divided amongst themselves and irritated against Henry IV. Some of them espoused the cause of Alexander II. and his successor, Gregory VII., the true and lawful Sovereign Pontiffs of the Roman Church; others followed the banner of Cadolaüs of Parma, and afterwards of Gilbert of Ravenna, the anti-popes, proud and dissolute men, who had treacherously entered the fold of Jesus Christ to ravage it. In those rude times the right was only upheld at the point of the sword or the lance, or, if force was insufficient, treachery carried the point. Therefore it frequently happened that a prince, oppressed by his enemies and despoiled of his states, was forced to seek, in a distant place of exile and under a borrowed name and garb, a refuge from perfidy.

However, Yoland's days glided peacefully by within the convent; docile to her teachers, esteemed by her companions, beloved by all, she was happy. One fine morning towards the end of the month of May, the young pupils, under the care of some of the religious, went to a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Help. This shrine stood in the midst of a little wood situated just outside the cloister walls, not far from a limpid stream crossed by a rustic bridge. The mildness of the season, the fresh verdure, the pure air fragrant with sweet scents, the harmonious song of numberless different birds that hopped from branch to branch or hid their nests in the thick foliage, all invited the noble maidens to linger in the fields or on the flowering slopes of the neighboring hills. Some of the young girls amused themselves running through the fragrant grass amongst the humming bees; others chased the butterfly, with its wings of a thousand dyes; and others, again, stronger and more active, climbed with light step the surrounding hills. A knot of girls, seated under the shade of the elms, sang to a lute, gracefully touched by the fair Valdomire, a pious hymn in honor of Our Lady. Another group, near a fountain which gushed from the sides of the rock, gathered fresh flowers and twined them into garlands to adorn the sacred image, at whose feet all this youthful band were to unite in prayer, for such was the object of their coming.

Yoland, laden with the wealth of flowers, arranged them in garlands whilst conversing on the beauty of this delightful spot and walking beside the stream with Sister Valburga, her skilful teacher in the art of illuminating parchments. Thus chatting, they followed the bank, which led to a green turf-covered spot, and advanced, without perceiving it, to a solitary place, where the collected waters of the stream formed a basin, round which the nightingales sang joyously, hidden under the shade of white poplars, willows, and hazel trees. They stopped to listen to this sweet concert, and perhaps to see themselves reflected in the clear waters, when all at once the neighboring forest rang with the distant sound of the hunting-horn, the barking of dogs and the neighing of steeds. Somewhat alarmed, they turned their eyes in the direction of the noise, and could distinguish through the trees the hunters goading the sides of their ponderous coursers with the spur. All at once, at a few paces behind the two ladies, an immense stag sprang from the brushwood ; he ran, with head erect and horns thrown back, wild with terror ; he passed close by Yoland, knocked against her, threw her down, and flew on, whilst the poor child rolled to the edge of the water, fell in, and disappeared. Valburga uttered a terrible cry, rushed to the bank, and had the good fortune to seize her pupil by the dress when she came up to the surface of the water. The religious drew her out, laid her on the sand, and was busying herself in unfastening her dress that she might breathe more freely, when a young man, armed with a spear, rode up at full gallop in pursuit of the stag. At sight of the young girl lying pale and inanimate on the grass, the horseman drew rein, sprang to the ground, fastened his horse to the trunk of an ancient oak, and hastened towards the ladies. He wore at his side a carved silver gourd filled with old Chypre wine, a precaution always useful in the chase. To pour some drops on the lips of the sufferer, to rub her hands and temples, was the work of an instant, and he soon saw her come to herself, open her eyes and look slowly round her with a deep sigh. Yoland, entirely restored, arose and joined with Sister Valburga in thanking the hunter for the service which he had rendered her; then, leaning on the arm of the religious, they went slowly to rejoin their companions.

The horseman was the young Ottocar, son of the powerful Marquis of Brunn, who a short time before had called him to assist in the government of his states, for he was growing old. Ottocar had been betrothed from childhood to Gisela, daughter of the Duke of Moravia, but this did not prevent him from following the bent of his passions. He first allowed Yoland and Sister Valburga to proceed some distance, then suddenly reining in his horse, with a determined air he turned towards the part of the wood through which the ladies had disappeared, followed their path, and soon reached the meadow, where the pupils and religious had already gathered round Yoland, assisting her in changing part of her clothing, whilst they held out the other to dry in the sun.

Ottocar approached the youthful group with some embarrassment, and enquired after Yoland. She had already related to her companions what had happened to her, and the service which an unknown knight had rendered her, therefore he was at once surrounded by the pupils and religious. Yoland, who had recovered her color, came forward modestly, and offered him a wild-rose which she had just plucked:

"Accept it, my lord," said she to him—"accept it as a remembrance of the fine stag which thou didst lose in restoring me to consciousness."

Ottocar took the flower and fastened it in the left side of his doublet, then turning about, he rode towards the forest, spurring his steed with feverish ardor, and disappeared in the foliage. The young Marquis was about twenty years of age; he was tall and vigorous in person, but his manners were rude, and his character harsh and cruel. On rejoining his attendants, he found that the stag had fallen under the repeated blows of the hunters, but instead of rejoicing with them, as he usually did on such occasions, Ottocar received this news with a cold and abstracted air. Vainly did his companions come from all sides, carrying the trophies of the victories which they had won over the bears, bucks, boars, and foxes which inhabited these woods; vainly did the carts loaded with game set out for Brunn to the sound of horns, drums, and bells; Ottocar returned to the paternal roof without taking any part in the triumph, and throwing himself from his horse, he hastily retired to his apartments.

He eagerly unfastened his belt, took the wild rose which Yoland had given him, and was about to place it in a perfumed casket of gold, when he perceived that two of the petals had fallen off the flower. His narrow and superstitious mind saw in this an evil omen, and from this trifling loss he drew a bad augury. He immediately called for two astrologers whom he kept at the castle, showed them the precious flower, and commanded them to explain how and why it had lost two of its leaves.

These impostors were of Catalonian origin; they had lived for a long time amongst the Moors of Grenada, and declared themselves initiated in the science of the stars by their master, the celebrated Avicenno. They at once went up into their observatory, and feigned to pass the night there in reading the constellations; then next day, at dawn, they returned to the young prince and said to him:

"My lord, the stars have shown themselves favorable; we have seen that the sign of the Virgin in its ascension predicts the great destiny which Heaven reserves for thee. This rose, with its five leaves, represents the royal crown, which shall be adorned with five precious jewels. A young maiden of a princely house is destined for thy wife; she shall bring thee five cities surrounded by walls, and five fortresses : . . . that is to say, as many as there are petals on this flower."

At this absurd reply Ottocar was filled with joy, and he began mentally to connect the lying oracles' words with the young girl of the stream, whom he had so quickly decided on preferring to Gisela. He continually asked himself who she could be and whence she came ; her grace and dignity gave her the air of a queen. The ravages which the Danes were making at that period on the coast of England made him sometimes suppose that this young maiden's father was perhaps some king of Northumberland, Mercia, or of Western England, who, after a defeat, had come into Germany to raise troops, return to England, and reconquer his states. In the hope of discovering the damsel's rank, Ottocar at length resolved to question the Abbess of the monastery, a woman of wide renown, and whom he knew to be of great prudence.

He announced a grand hunt for the next day, and invited to it all the lords of his dominions ; he sent messages, praying them to bring with them their choicest hounds. Accordingly, at the dawn of the following day the young knights of the neighborhood, all armed with spears, pikes, and javelins, met at the drawbridge of Brunn, sounding the horn sonorously and making their steeds prance and gambol. Ottocar at once proceeded to the stables where his bay charger was kept. He was about to get into his saddle when he discovered that the two leaves of Yoland's rose had caught on the silver carving of his saddle-bows when he had left his horse the evening before ; he carefully picked up the leaves of the flower, put them into his purse, sprang on his horse, and, having had the bridge lowered, joined his guests.

When they reached the forest which lies at the confluence of the Scarth and Zwittau, they took their course towards the hills and plains of Austerlitz ; there the grand huntsman assigned to each of the hunters and his attendants their special post, whilst the dogs, released from their leashes, beat about the brushwood to start the game from its hiding-place. Already the forest was ringing with shouts, the barking of dogs, the galloping of horses, and the shrill sound of the horn ; from all parts fled the affrighted deer, making themselves a passage over glade and brushwood and forests of oaks and firs. Just then Ottocar, profiting by the general eagerness in following the flying deer, reined to the right, passed through a solitary valley, and, putting spurs to his panting steed, reached the edge of the stream beside which he had met the unconscious Yoland. Then he hastily turned bridle and rode off at full gallop.

He at length arrived at the gates of the monastery ; he fastened his horse to the trunk of an aged linden-tree which shaded the entrance, and passed into the first court, where he found the apartments of the Abbess. The gate-keeper had often seen Ottocar when he accompanied his father the Marquis to the church on certain grand festivals of the year ; he knew him at once, and made haste to announce him. The Superioress was at first surprised at this unexpected visit, but, like a clever and prudent woman, she showed no sign of it, and went down to the parlor, where she found the young prince, to whom she gave a most cordial welcome, asking him what had caused him to honor with his presence the humble community which she directed. Ottocar replied that in the ardor of the chase he had been led to follow in pursuit of a frightened stag, of which he had lost sight in the neighboring forest, and that, while seeking it in the glade and brushwood, he had all at once found himself in the fields which surrounded the convent; that seeing this, he had proposed to himself to come thither to greet the reverend Mother, for whom he had always professed the highest esteem.

Theotberga thanked him for his attention, and began to converse on indifferent subjects, whilst he partook of a delicate collation of fruits and Italian wines which she had served for him; but Ottocar, as if struck by a sudden thought, interrupted his repast to speak of Yoland, and to ask if she was quite recovered from her fall into the stream and the fainting-fit which had been the result of it.

"Thanks to Heaven, she is very well," replied the Abbess, "and seems to have forgotten the occurrence, like a brave and noble girl as she is."

"Is she a townswoman of ours, or a stranger?" asked the young man. "She is said to be a stranger," continued he. "Whose daughter is she?"

"The daughter of a humble citizen of middle age," answered the Abbess.

Ottocar, absorbed in thought, cast his eyes vacantly on the objects which surrounded him; then, abruptly breaking silence, he said:

"Madame, thou dost dissimulate. This young girl betrays a royal origin; her countenance, her carriage, are the marks of royalty: she cannot be of common birth. Where is her father?"

The Abbess guessed from the change in the young prince's face what a dark tempest was agitating his soul; she felt her suspicions as to Pandolph's real title increase. Ottocar's last words fully enlightened her. She firmly believed that he had certain information as to the true condition of the exile; therefore she answered frankly:

"I think thou art not mistaken, my lord."

"So much the better," said he quickly; "for, in any case, I wish to ask her hand. Question Yoland, and in a few days give me her answer."

"But, my lord, art thou not betrothed to the Princess Gisela of Moravia?" asked Theotberga. "The Duke already considers thee as his son, and all thy vassals are preparing to congratulate thee on this alliance."

The young man reddened, then, looking angrily at the Abbess, he said:

"Where does Yoland's father live? At Brunn? . . . At Olmutz?"

"He lives at Znaim," replied the religious.

"God guard thee, Mother!" said he then; "in three days thou shalt see me here for my answer."

She had, then, the terrible secret at last, poor woman; and from her knowledge of the rude, haughty, and inflexible character of the young lord, she shuddered as she foresaw the misfortunes which would fall on her, on Yoland, and perhaps even on the convent. Nevertheless, she said to herself that God, the guardian of innocence and defender of right, would extend his powerful hand for the safety of the young girl and of the spouses of his divine Son. Still, she thought it prudent to write to Pandolph of what had taken place, and during the night she sent her letter to Znaim by a mounted messenger, who brought back the answer; it was thus expressed:

"The lowliness of her condition, her poverty, and her being a foreigner would not permit him to suffer that his daughter should aspire to such a brilliant alliance. Not being made for so much honor, it would be unworthy of the Marquis to raise her to himself; he would much rather she should follow a vocation to the convent. And if God, after all, did not call Yoland to the religious life, he would find some man of obscure birth who would accept her for his wife."

The Abbess foresaw the tempest which this reply would awaken in the heart of the Moravian; she made a thousand plans to protect her pupil and the convent against the violence of the young tyrant. None appeared to her surer than the following: to persuade Pandolph to come and secretly take his daughter and conduct her to the Castle of Znaim, where she would be fully sheltered, that citadel being without the states of Brunn. On his side, Ottocar, with his usual shrewdness, already said to himself that, in case his offer should be rejected, the father would not leave his daughter at the convent, and that he would come to seek her as soon as possible. Therefore he resolved to place himself on the road with his followers, and to force the father to give him his daughter if it cost him his life. However, the first thing to do was to discover Yoland's feelings towards him. To assure himself of this, he commanded to be brought to him one of those peddler-women who go to the fairs and village festivals, selling pins, needles, little mirrors, ribbons, and other trifles of that sort. He gave her a considerable sum, commanding her to go quickly to Vienna and provide herself with all kinds of fancy goods and articles of taste and elegance which could be found in the Austrian capital.

He could not have found one better for his purpose. This woman was a Morlaccian Bohemian, about thirty years old, quick and alert. Her long tresses of ebony-black hair fell over her shoulders; her brown face was oval, her forehead high, her eyes were black and shone with a peculiar light, and when they fixed themselves piercingly on any one they embarrassed and bewildered him like the eyes of a basilisk. She was, besides, a thief by profession, and was so adroit at this trade that she would rob a man before he could perceive her. To this talent she added that of hypocrisy—the art of feigning virtue and piety. Her false modesty, her apparent humility, her reserved demeanor, gave her the air of a saint; but she was corrupt and malignant. With the peasants she passed for a fortune-teller, and skilfully deceived them; whilst pretending to read the poor people's hands, to examine their lines, sinews, finger-joints, she would suddenly despoil them of their rings or earrings; then the good souls would go looking for them in the fields or in their houses, thinking they had lost them, whilst these ornaments would pass into the pocket of the Bohemian, exchanged for the good money of the Jews. She especially succeeded in carrying off children in the cradle, profiting by the momentary absence of the mother or nurse, and, like a vulture pouncing on a dove, she would disappear with her prey, and sell in Transylvania the unfortunate infants whom she had stolen in Hungary; then she would make away in Westphalia, Franconia, or Lusatia with those whom she had carried off from Bohemia or Moravia. How many mothers had been plunged into grief by her cruelty! Twenty times the peasants were in pursuit of her, and twenty times she had slipped out of their hands like an adder in the brushwood.

Swatiza (this was the Bohemian's name) repaired to Vienna, where, with Ottocar's money, she supplied herself with purses of blue figured velvet, ornamented with silk and gold embroidery, silver clasps, steel studs. She bought besides, bottles of perfume, gilt and enamelled vinaigrettes, belts with silver fringes covered with filigree, with assorted buckles, carved, embossed, and engraved; rings in links, twists, or serpents, with emeralds, onyx, rubies, and granate; earrings in every form—pears, almonds, roses, bells; silver thimbles, needle-cases, pincushions, chains and mirrors from Murano, neck-laces of polished coral, facets polished and unpolished, strings of red beads, tablets, balls of perfume—in a word, the trickster had made ample provision of all those trifles which delight young girls. On her return to Brunn she presented herself to Ottocar, who, under the seal of secrecy, opened his heart to her, and then said :

" My good Swatiza, if thou dost render me the service that I am about to ask, . . . thou shalt not find me ungrateful, be assured."

"My lord," replied the Bohemian, " thou knowest well that I am happy to give pleasure to people when I can ; for, if I am poor, it is because I impoverish myself in assisting my neighbor with my labor and with my purse."

"Truly ? . . . Well, knowest thou, at the convent of the reverend lady Theotberga, a young lady named Yoland, from Znaim ?"

"Do I know her, askest thou, my lord ? Oh ! but I know her indeed. She is truly the most amiable of all the pupils. And then she is so good ! God guard her, the dear child ! . . . When I return from the fairs of Olmutz, Brunn, Hradisch, and Prostnitz, I always stop at the convent with my wares, and I am not left at the gate, I can tell thee ! . . . There are Sister Cunegonde, Sister Eribert, and Sister Galswinthe, who do not wish me ill ; so, as soon as they see me coming, they cry : 'Ah ! Swatiza, what fine things hast thou ? Hast any Agnus Dei ? Hast thou reliquaries in the shape of a heart ? Show us all those.' And thereupon I show them. . . . Thou shouldst see ! . . .

As soon as I open my box I kneel down, I cover my hand with a linen cloth, saying: 'It is not for me, a sinner, to touch these holy things. . . .' And the good Sisters kiss them all very devoutly; then, as I do not sell these holy things, they give me in exchange alms, which I pocket willingly. O the good souls! . . ."

"Well, well. . . . And Yoland—dost thou ever see her?"

"Oh! yes, my lord, because Sister Cunegonde often brings me to the field where the young ladies take their recreation after breakfast. There I see Yoland—a child who has money, I can tell thee, and good taste in the bargain. I have no sooner shown my wares than the rogue seizes on the best I have, and keeps them, no matter what price I may ask. The last time I went there I sold her a purse of double crimson velvet, all gilt and spangles, for which she paid me a fine gold crown."

"If that be the case," replied the young tyrant of Brunn, "thou shalt repair to the convent and seek to converse with Yoland alone. Thou wilt let her choose all that she desires, and thou wilt tell her that Lord Ottocar, Marquis of Brunn, begs her to accept them in exchange for the rose. Thou wilt tell her everything good of me; thou wilt inform her of my desire to marry her. If she answers thee that she is of too low extraction to aspire to the rank of a marchioness, ask to see her hand, and assure her, on the contrary, that she is of royal blood. Canst thou not discover by certain signs the lineage of an individual?"

"Oh! trust me for knowing all such things as that," said the impostor, who profited by the occasion to make a dupe. "Give me thy hand. Seest thou these three lines on the third joint of thy little finger? They indicate that thy mother descends in direct line from Otho the Great, and that, consequently, the imperial blood flows in thy veins."

"By my beard! thou sayest true. And how knowest thou that? What signs hast thou?"

"The signs which my dread and mysterious art makes known to me. I will tell thee more still, . . . that the half-circle of white which surrounds the root of your thumb-nail clearly reveals to me that some drops of the blood of Charlemagne flow in your heart."

Through this jugglery of the Bohemian Ottocar was filled with hope. He no longer doubted that he should know the mystery of Yoland's birth, and he held it as just as certain as that he had beneath his eyes the genealogical tree of his family, signed by the notary of the crown and sealed by the golden seal. Passion is blind and leads men to blind themselves. Ottocar, that proud and haughty lord, placed his interests in such a delicate matter in the hands of a miserable creature who made sport of him and led him to believe the most gross impostures. He did not see that he was playing a perfidious and disloyal part—a part which would draw down the anger of his father, the displeasure of his vassals, the vengeance of the Duke of Moravia, his father-in-law, to whom he was doing a mortal injury in refusing the hand of his daughter, to whom he had been betrothed. None of these considerations stopped him, and turning to the Bohemian, "Go," said he—"go, and bring me a favorable answer; and all will be well. But, if thy life is dear to thee, guard thy tongue, that nothing of all this may escape thee, or, I swear by the blade of my sword I shall kill thee with my own hand!"

CHAPTER V.

THE NOCTURNAL VOICE.

On receipt of the Abbess's letter, Pandolph at once understood that at all hazards he must fly from the advances of Ottocar, whom he knew to be a daring, headstrong, and determined young man, who would be enraged at any obstacles which would obstruct his way. Yoland was in a place which was within his jurisdiction. The religious could only oppose violence with their tears, prayers, and lamentations. The Marquis's guard were coarse and cruel men, the remnants of those barbarians whom the Emperor Henry I. had defeated in a hundred contests, and who had a hundred times returned in new hordes of mercenaries which were the plague of Upper Germany, and sold themselves to the highest bidder. These wretches added to the fierceness of the bear the cunning of the fox and the rapacity of the wolf; they neither respected the holiness of a place, nor the weakness of a young girl, nor the gray hairs of an old man. They were Christians only in so far that they were baptized; for the rest, they were avaricious by nature, dishonest by inclination, and restless and wandering by taste.

Pandolph said to himself that if Ottocar wished to possess himself of Yoland nothing would be easier. A troop of these vultures would effect this as easily as the hawk tears the dove from its mother's bosom. What should he do? From whom ask aid and protection? From the Marquis's own father? That would be running a great risk; and if the going there was dangerous, the return would be still more so, on account of the ambushes which the minions of Ottocar would lay for him, and into which he must necessarily fall. Have recourse to the Duke of Moravia, to the father of Gisela—Gisela, so dishonorably forsaken? Would that not be to cause discord between the two states, perhaps enkindle war, and thus put poor Yoland's life in danger?—for there would be no hesitation in sacrificing her to settle the dispute. What seemed the most feasible and the wisest was to snatch the victim from the lion's claws, and conceal her in a place where the infatuated young man could not discover her.

One evening, at sunset, a traveller was crossing the Igla over a wooden bridge. The features of the knight were concealed under the double shelter of a helmet and hood. His breastplate and neckpiece were of burnished steel; his coat-of-arms, of dark green, was fastened to a broad shoulder-belt which supported a Moorish scimeter, whilst the belt upheld a triangular rapier; the thighs and legs were covered with polished steel, and the feet encased in iron. A sharp lance glistened in one of his hands, both of which were protected by iron gauntlets.

This man, thus armed, had no sooner crossed the river than he urged his horse forward anxiously, taking care, however, to keep the middle of the road, as if he feared some surprise. It was almost night when he came on a path which lost itself in the forest; therefore his anxiety seemed to be redoubled. He spurred his horse with renewed energy, and, not content with casting piercing glances to the right and left, he often turned round to see if he were not pursued.

A dense darkness soon spread over the woods, where the light was very dim even in daytime. The horseman slackened his pace and advanced with great precaution, feeling the path with his lance to remove all obstacles. The moon, now in its decline, was only rising; still, its feeble light forced a passage here and there through the foliage, and momentarily lit up the windings of the road. At length he suddenly arrived at a clearing where the moonlight, falling perpendicularly, brightened one part of the wood with a strong light, leaving the other in the deepest darkness.

The knight paused a moment, raised his visor, and took breath. The place where he stood was of oval form, carpeted with a fine, close grass. It was surrounded on all sides by tall firs, whose long, tufted branches joined and interlaced themselves, forming a thick curtain, from which hung the cones and the green and bristling tufts which are both the leaves and fruits of this tree.

In the centre of the space stood three ancient beech-trees, whose immense branches extended in all directions. The shadow which they cast on the side opposite the moon resembled the body of a terrible giant lying on the ground. The wild and gloomy surroundings, the silence of night, the darkness of the woods, the mournful cry of the owl, the low murmur of a distant cascade, all united to fill the soul of the traveller with an uneasiness which was almost terror.

He was about to lower his visor and proceed on his way, and had already taken up the reins of his steed, when a deep voice, coming from the depths of the forest, exclaimed:

"Back, Pandolph, back! Turn thy horse and resume the road by which thou camest. To advance is death! Ottocar, foreseeing that thou wouldst doubtless proceed to the convent to bear thence thy daughter, has laid ambuscades for thee at the spot where thou leavest the woods. His minions await thee, and thou canst not escape them; for there are many of these ruthless soldiers. Beware that thou pass not again the bridge of Igla; but higher up the stream thou shalt find a ford, if the water be low. As soon as thou hast reached Znaim, hasten to the Abbot Daufer; he will tell thee what thou must do. Leave Yoland to the care of God, the Abbess, and of him who gives thee this warning. And now depart; I will no longer detain thee."

The horseman was, as you have already guessed, none other than Count Pandolph of Groningen, who was secretly proceeding to the convent where his daughter was placed, to withdraw her from it, if possible, before Ottocar should attempt to obtain possession of her by violence. To depict the astonishment of Pandolph at these peremptory commands from a rude but honest voice which made the forest ring, is no easy matter. At first he stopped short, then grasped his lance and held it in rest, his ear and his whole being growing more attentive. He sought to discover in the midst of the darkness if he could perceive the person who thus imperiously addressed him, and whilst the voice became louder he felt his heart beat faster. The cluster of beech-trees especially attracted his attention; for the words seemed to come from there. Once he thought he saw a white figure moving around him, gradually grow larger, then suddenly diminishing and disappearing in the forest; but he soon discovered that it was only an effect of the moonlight playing among the branches, now stirred by the night-breeze. However, the Count recovered from his surprise, and raising his voice in his turn, "Halloo!" cried he, "who art thou that speakest so kindly to me?" All was silent. He advanced his horse towards the cluster of beeches, tried their foliage with the point of his lance—it concealed no one. He went all round the clearing; the forest which enclosed it betrayed not the presence of any one, and he heard not a whisper nor footstep. He reflected an instant, then, settling himself firmly in his stirrups, he took the road by the river, musing on the adventure and asking himself whence such advice could come. He said to himself that, knowing the Marquis's plans, the reverend Mother

Abbess had probably ordered some servant of the monastery to come to meet him and make known the snares which were laid for him. Still, that voice, coming from an invisible mouth, seemed rather that of some soul in pain, wandering through the forest, and raised by divine Providence to save him. Had not his good angel, whom he had so piously invoked on entering the forest, taken this means that he might escape death? In these thoughts he journeyed on, and soon came out of the dark woods, advancing cautiously, as if he feared a sudden attack.

He had at length reached the banks of the Igla, and was proceeding along beside it for about an arrow-shot, when he saw coming from behind a cluster of willows two men armed with spears, who threw themselves upon him, crying · "Yield thyself, dog, or thou art a dead man!"

Pandolph, expecting a surprise, was on his guard: He made such a vigorous thrust with his lance at the first of his assailants that it pierced his left side and stretched him dead on the bank; then urging his horse towards the second and seizing his scimeter, he was about to cut off his head when the bandit leaped to one side and sought to bury his weapon where there was a break in Pandolph's armor. But the latter turned it aside by a movement of his horse, and it was the noble beast that suffered, the weapon grazed his haunches; but the assassin was off his guard, and as he was hastening to deal another blow the Count pierced him between the neck and shoulder. He saw him totter.

Putting spurs to his horse, he drove his steed into the river, forded it, and reached the other bank without difficulty.

Having escaped that danger, Pandolph journeyed all night, and towards daybreak he found himself quite near the convent over which the Lord Abbot Daufer presided. In those unhappy times the abbeys were the surest asylums for the unfortunate, for those who sought to escape the pursuit of tyrants, for those tired of an adventurous life, disgusted with the vanities of the world and the illusiveness of fortune. There they found rest, peace, justice, a sure refuge, salutary counsels, help and protection, liberty and security. In those sacred and venerated sanctuaries, the unhappy found consolation, the poor bread, the husbandman a shelter, tools, and seeds. Within its walls the choir chanted, night and day, the praises of God; the cells were filled with manuscripts, which were scientific treasures; the workshops brought forth the arts and the trades which are necessary to the wants and luxuries of life. It is to the monks alone that we owe the surest and most refined principles of the manual arts, such as the working in gold, mosaic, inlaying, and carving; their gardens abounded in medicinal herbs, their dispensaries contained balms, antidotes, and the most useful potions and remedies. Some amongst the religious practised surgery and were acquainted with medicine; and if there had not been monasteries at that period, man would have died without the help of man or the consolations of religion. To the monks of the

Middle Ages we even owe the improvement in the equine and bovine races, the art of raising flocks, swarms of bees, and working in wool and wax.

In a word, the monasteries were the flowering oases rising here and there to brighten the arid wastes and burning deserts of Western barbarism. If a convent arose on the banks of a river, there was soon seen beside it a bridge for the accommodation of travellers, and a grain-mill, and a path led the people to the church. Was it beside a lake, a boat was very soon placed there to carry people or animals from one bank to the other; or skiffs to bear the fishermen, who soon, bringing thither their huts, scattered here and there, gradually formed villages and hamlets. If the convent were surrounded by swamps, bogs, or marshy land, the monks dug spacious canals for the passage of the stagnant water; they filled up ravines, they smoothed hills, gave a slope to the meadows, and by these long and painful labors they changed to wholesome ground immense tracts of dry or marshy land; they dug up the earth and prepared a fertile and virgin soil for the culture of the crops, the scarcity of which was often at this period so disastrous to towns and cities. They thus purified the bad air, peopled the solitudes, and opened roads of communication between different nations. The world, which to-day regards the monks as useless people, the parasites of society, forgets that it is to them it owes that civilization of which it is so proud. And we ourselves, we Italians, who name our country the garden of Europe, and who justly admire the fertile plains of Lombardy, of Venetia, and the southern provinces, overlook the fact that the countries which are now the richest and most fertile were once swamps or forests which were dried up or hewed down by the monks. But human nature is forgetful, ungrateful, and cowardly; it insults the lion which has grown old; a time will come, however, when God, the just dispenser, shall render to every man according to his works.*

The mysterious voice had commanded Pandolph to repair to the holy and powerful Abbot Daufer; he obeyed; and all the time asking himself how the Abbot could be aware of his plan for the removal of his daughter, he arrived in front of the lofty walls which surrounded the monastery. In those days of continual warfare, even the places consecrated to religion in Germany were defended by thick walls, fortified by towers, battlements, bulwarks, and turrets, to protect persons and property from the ever-recurring incursions of the Hungarians, Russians, Prussians, and other barbarous tribes from the depths of Sarmatia. We still see the remains of these formidable means of defence in some parts of Italy; for instance, at Nonantola,

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* Those who wish to assure themselves of the truth of these assertions have only to read the "Dissertations" of Muratori and many other historians of those times. They can see in what condition were Lombardy and Venetia in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, and compare the swamps and forests of that day with the lands of the present, cultivated by the monks—those lands which were seized in 1810 and sold to Jews, to usurers, and to foreigners, and that to the great disadvantage of the poor of those countries, hundreds of whom every day found bread at the gates of the convents.

Monte Cassino, Saint Zeno, at Verona, at the Vatican, and at Saint Sabino, on the Mount Aventine, at Rome.

Pandolph found the drawbridge still raised ; for they only lowered it at the dawn of day. He was therefore obliged to wait ; so, alighting from his horse, he retired some distance from the fortifications, behind a cluster of green oaks, till the opening of the gates and the lowering of the drawbridge. He was scarcely seated when he heard the trampling of horses beside the moat, and, having parted the foliage, he perceived a small troop of soldiers belonging to the monastery, whom he supposed were a patrol returning from their nightly rounds outside the walls for the safety of the convent, within and without. When this troop had reached the head of the drawbridge, they stopped. The soldiers raised their visors, wiped off the dust with which they were covered, blew a blast on the horn, and made signs to the warders who had appeared on the summit of the tower at the first signal. Meanwhile, one of the soldiers, a man of gigantic frame, with bristling mustaches, said, turning to one of his comrades ;

“ Halloo ! Porcupine, thy shoulder-piece is covered with blood. Nathless, last night's robber must have given thee a tough blow. ”

“ And seest thou thine own helmet ? One would say that he who gave thee so sturdy a thrust would fain have split thy pate to the very beard.”

“ Ay, marry ! . . . And I dealt him betwixt the arm and the wrist so stout a stroke that the knave is out of the way of doing harm to any one. By my word ! his hand hung only by a shred of flesh. I'faith ! it is no joking with Sans Quartier. It fares ill with those who would meddle with him."

"Prithee, tell me," cried Iron Arm, "what, in the fiend's name, possessed the Marquis Ottocar last night with his ambuscades of knaves ? The rascals ! they would pounce, I warrant me, on some poor devil of a traveller. But it fared badly with them, and, by my faith, they got their fill. Of the four who met us first near the pillars of St. Boniface, not one, I dare be sworn, went back to Brunn to bear the tidings to the Marquis."

"And the five bearded knaves who lay in wait beside the cross-road in the forest," said the Terrible, "had their time and pains for naught. I split one of their skulls with my battle-axe, in such fashion that his brains flew all around. I cut off another's cheek and a piece of his jaw, so that he spit out all his teeth, which were, in truth, like the tusks of an old boar."

"And did not I," said the Bear, "by a clean stroke pierce the heart of him that threatened Sans Quartier with his axe ? And did not Porcupine right bravely thrust his knife into the stomach of him who made a thrust with his spear at Rouge ?"

"Aye," said Rouge, "and didst mark the two rascals stretched beside the Igla. One had already kicked the bucket, and his comrade never ceased whimpering because of a paltry little scratch between the neck and shoulder ; on my word, he cried for mercy, stretching his hands out to me—the cowardly slave—but I dealt him a blow in the stomach with my halberd, and sent him to join the other. These bullies had, I doubt me not, fallen upon some passing knight, and, by way of pastime, sought to wring his neck ; but in place of catching, that time they were caught. They paused, it may be, at the head of the bridge, till he had followed the path through the woods, and met him on the river bank. I think not, however, that it was any of our men, because Camerlingue sent out no others but us to scour the country during the night."

While listening to this fearful discourse, Pandolph thanked God that he had escaped so many perils. Then, too, he became more and more lost in conjecture as to the mysterious voice in the forest, and the perfect knowledge which the Abbot seemed to have had of Ottocar's infamous designs, of his own visit to the Abbess Theotberga ; and the more he reflected, the more he thought himself the sport of a dream. Meanwhile, awaiting till the warder should come down to lower the bridge, the soldiers continued polishing their harnesses and conversing.

"Oddshearts !" said one of them, "this morning breeze gives me appetite enough to eat the Father Cellarer without sauce."

"I' faith !" continued another, "that would not be so bad ; . . . the Father Cellarer is fat. But as for me, I trust myself into the good graces of Brother Colomban. He keeps the keys of the larder, and can bestow rashers of bacon and slices of smoked meat. . . . My mouth waters when I think of it. Thou shouldst see the cutlets and legs of roast mutton which will be put on our trenchers!"

"And which thou wilt attack right heartily, comrade! But what of that, if Brother Candidus, the butler, tap us not some jugs of beer?"

"And fills them up again! With two cups of wine in my stomach, I would leap like a leopard over a score of Bohemian pikemen. If Camerlingue would put me on guard every night, I object not, provided he first gives me into the hands of Brother Candidus; I would become a knight-errant, and, if he would just add to that a glass of brandy, I would attack an elephant."

Whilst they discussed thus the warder had come down; he opened the gate, covered the drawbridge, and all the soldiers entered the first enclosure, two by two; then the gate closed, the drawbridge was raised, for the sun had not yet reached the horizon. The men repaired to their quarters; there they laid down their arms, hung up their breast-plates on the wall, and, without removing their helmets, they entered the refectory reserved for guests. There they loudly called for Brother Colomban.

"Well, well, my lambs," said he, coming in, "hath any of ye need of a leech's skill? How many of those knaves did ye lay low last night—did ye cut down? I wot me ye found it was not work like plucking chickens nor smoking hams. Ah! where is thy shoulder-piece, Sans Quartier? And thou, Porcupine, what has befallen thy helmet? There must have been hot work."

"By my faith, we dealt them many a blow, and in good measure too, I warrant thee. Dost see, Brother Colomban, when the Abbot Daufer's men-at-arms unfurled the banner with the Convent colors the banditti of Brunn felt that their hour was come. They bullied somewhat at first, but our lances soon made them change their tune."

While these men were eating in the refectory of the monastery, Pandolph, seeing that the gate was closed again, stretched himself on the grass, and, fatigued by his night's journey, he fell asleep. He was awakened by the noise of trumpets sounding close beside him, at the convent walls: he was on his feet in an instant. Two horsemen were blowing with all their might on those instruments; they were followed by four men-at-arms equally well mounted, and carrying bare swords; behind them came two hooded monks, riding on white mules covered with scarlet cloth. At some distance there marched a dozen men, with helmets on their heads, scythes in their hands, and these were preceded by two heralds-at-arms, in rich hauberks embossed in gold, with glittering helmets, and shields emblazoned with the arms of the Abbot Daufer, which bore an azure lion rampant in a field of silver, with a mitre for a crest, surmounted by a sword and a pastoral staff. They carried on their shoulders two axes with silver nails, attached to their arms by chains of the same metal.

Last came the Abbot Daufer himself between two knights bearing long swords, which were always wielded with both hands. He rode on a magnificent snow-white palfrey, with a head-piece of carved silver, surmounted by three waving plumes; the reins and the bit were of gold; the harness and caparisons fringed with gold and crimson silk; the knot of the crupper was a costly topaz. What could be seen of the saddle was of red velvet embroidered in gold and strewn with precious stones, while the steed was almost hidden under a long saddle-cloth of taffeta, with pieces of celestial blue laid on. Stirrups of silver, with stirrup-straps of velvet, completed this costly equipage. The Abbot himself was simply clad in an ample white hooded cloak over his religious habit. In the rear came four men on foot leading as many horses loaded with dishes, with mattresses and quilts, and all the other articles necessary on a journey—for, in those times, every traveller had to carry with him all that he required, for inns were rare—and, last of all, a strong troop of halberdiers formed the rear-guard of the retinue.

As soon as the warder heard the sound of the trumpet, he hastened to open the gate. The horsemen formed a line on either side of the bridge; the Lord Abbot passed between them, giving them his blessing; then, having reached the inner court, he quickly alighted from his horse, assisted by the two heralds-at-arms, of whom one held the bridle, the other the stirrup. Meanwhile, Pandolph, who had been witness of this scene, was more curious than ever to sound the mystery.

"So, then," said he to himself, "the Abbot was out of the monastery; he has ridden all night, accompanied by a strong escort. A serious and unforeseen cause must have forced him to this mysterious and nocturnal journey. The voice in the forest commanded me to repair to this prelate, adding that I would receive from him help, advice, and protection. His people have watched and reconnoitred all night. How could he know that Ottocar had laid snares for me? Where was he all night? Which way did he go? How it bewilders me!"

Thus thinking, Pandolph remounted his horse, and, crossing the bridge, presented himself at the great door, asking for the Lord Abbot.

"He is very tired," answered the porter, "having just come in. He went out yesterday evening at sunset, and has only returned a quarter of an hour since; it were scarce courteous to disturb him before he hath taken a little repose. Come rather with me to the Father Cellarer. Thou canst rest and refresh thyself somewhat, for thou seemest equally tired."

So saying, he made the traveller enter, while the two grooms who had assisted him to dismount at once led away his horse in the direction of the stables. The Cellarer received Pandolph in a frank and cordial manner.

"Thou art welcome, Sir Knight," said he, "and may God guard thee. It would seem thou art still fasting; some food will revive thee."

And he brought him to the guest-chamber, where a shank of venison, some white bread, and a jug of beer refreshed him.

If he had lived in our own days, Pandolph would have made a plentiful breakfast on some slices of toasted bread and a cup of coffee, because the delicate stomachs of our time could not receive any more, for fear of indigestion ; but the men of old required something substantial, and, after having breakfasted heartily, could play their part well again at dinner. That meal, composed of strong meats and rich pastries, washed down with generous wines, did not at all interfere with their supper. Truly, these Teuton stomachs—God give them joy of them !—still possess, even in our own day, this faculty which might digest iron. We see some who, after a hearty dinner, still find a little empty corner for a plentiful supper; but in our southern countries a light repast is followed by a still lighter collation, and yet many pass an indifferent night, rhubarb and scammony being required to keep this poor nineteenth-century stomach in order.

After having refreshed himself, Pandolph asked the Cellarer if the hour were convenient for him to see the Lord Abbot; for he desired to converse with him. The monk readily replied :

"To tell the truth, the reverend Father has just come into the monastery and has retired to his cell to change his travelling-dress; but he told me as he passed that if by chance a knight named Pandolph came here, I was to inform him at once after the

Community Mass, and bring the traveller to him."

"I am that knight," said Pandolph, "and I would be grateful to thee if thou wouldst bring me to his Reverence as soon as thou dost think proper. But he has just come in, thou sayest, and as he is already advanced in years, why, instead of assisting at Mass, does he not take a little rest in his cell?"

"Oh! the reverend Father would not miss Mass for anything in the world. At the night office he is always the first in his stall; and during the winter, which is so severe in this climate, he becomes so weak from the austerities which he practises that he is often obliged to be assisted to his cell by two lay-brothers, who take him by each arm. There is no danger of his ever being absent from the community exercises; and during the thirty years which he has been Abbot no one has ever seen him dispense himself from Matins when he is in the convent. Yesterday, I know not why, he set out after Compline, and journeyed all night. Some important affair must have forced him to go out so late. It must be, I warrant, some great act of charity, the saving of some one in great danger; for, in such circumstances, this man of God forgets the weight of years, the inclemency of the season, the fatigue of travelling; he would brave the cruelty of a tyrant, the strength of a whole army. I sought, through curiosity, to know from the soldiers of the guard where they went in such haste last night; they answered that after having crossed the river Igla he gave the order to halt and remain in their ranks in perfect silence; then, with two of our brothers, he went towards Kuruma. I questioned these two brothers, but they had been commanded by the Abbot, in virtue of their holy obedience, to tell no one whither he had led them; besides, if they wished to tell they could not, for on reaching this mysterious place the Lord Abbot left them, to converse with some one who could not be seen, but whose voice could be distinguished through the darkness of night."

Pandolph listened to all these details with great attention, and, as his repast was finished, he followed the Cellarer to the room appointed for him in the guest-house. The Father then left him, saying that he would come for him after Tierce.

The guest-house was a large building which had been erected outside the cloister. It was divided into two parts, one of which was reserved exclusively for men, the other entirely for women. The latter was subdivided into lodgings for married people and their children. The ground-floor was used for stables, coach-houses, and store-houses. These latter were immense rooms, arched and well aired, where provisions of all kinds abounded—dried and smoked meats, cheese, fruits, salt and pickled fish. Under the cloister arches were the kitchens, dispensaries, cellars, and refectories; behind the kitchens furnaces and immense tubs offered to tired or frozen travellers the refreshment and powerful remedy of a hot bath. On the outer court of the convent opened the windows of the pharmacy and the laboratories, furnished with alembics, mortars, balms, all kinds of apparatus, and every species of remedy. Every day there came to the monastery two or three hundred poor persons to be fed. As for the guest-house, it was always full of travellers ; the public inns were so bad that they had to ask hospitality at the convents.

On each side of the long corridor were numberless doors, which gave access to the rooms reserved for travellers. Led by his guide, Pandolph stopped at the door of No. 10, to which he found the servants of the convent had already brought his trunk, helmet, breast-plate, and lance, as well as the harness of his horse.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LORD ABBOT DAUFER.

As soon as the Mass was over and the office of Tierce ended, the Cellarer came to seek Pandolph, whom he found seated on a chest at the foot of his bed, deep in thought. The Count arose and silently followed the monk, who brought him to the Abbot's apartments, where he left him. Pandolph saw several rooms, all richly furnished for that unrefined period. The walls of the first were covered with pictures rudely painted, illustrating various events in the life of Saint Benedict. The figures were long and thin, without any genius in coloring or design; under each of them some verses in barbarous rhyme told the name of the saint it represented. Saint Benedict, still young, is seen within his cave, where a basket is bringing him food; then the monks of Saint Como offering him poisoned wine, and the cup breaking into fragments when the saint blessed it; further on, Saint Placidus, having fallen into the lake, is being drawn out by Saint Maur, who comes to him walking on the water and seizes him by the hair.

The second hall was ornamented with scenes from the life of Gregory the Great: the holy Pontiff is seen sending the monk Austin to convert the English; these new Christians produced in their turn Saint Boniface, apostle of Bavaria; Saint Wilfrid, apostle of the Saxons; Saint Ludger, of the Frieslanders; Saint Rumbert, who brought the light of the Gospel into Denmark and Norway; Saint Gerard, who baptized the Hungarians and Bohemians. The other rooms further on were hung with Cordovan leather, red or blue, dressed or undressed, plain or worked, with gold, silver, or painted flowers. The ceilings and beams, rafters and mouldings, painted or gilded, were decorated with heads of saints, roses, or shields. The plain, solid furniture was, for the most part, of walnut, richly and heavily carved, and ornamented with copper and gold; the chairs with twisted legs, and the sofas with high arms and backs, offered to the eye grimacing faces and fantastic heads of animals. The massive tables were bending under the weight of vases and cups of colored glass, articles in ivory and wood inlaid with shells and mother-of-pearl. The floors were made of various foreign woods, and beneath the feet stretched a carpet of bear, wolf, fox, lynx, or deer skin.

Pandolph was regarding with surprise this luxury and elegance, which for that epoch was truly regal, when suddenly a side door opened, and the Abbot himself came towards him in an affectionate manner.

"Welcome," said he, taking his hand; "the Count of Groningen is welcome, in the name of Jesus Christ."

It is impossible to paint the astonishment of Pandolph on hearing himself called by his name and title—he, who had thought himself entirely unknown in Moravia, to be thus named by the Abbot! . . . He recovered himself, however, and courteously kissed the hand of the holy old man, who at once led him into the most distant apartment, which he used for a bedroom. But how different this was from all the other rooms! The bed, formed of a few boards roughly put together, was covered by an humble sheep-skin; a little walnut writing-table and two stools composed the furniture. If, in the preceding halls, the windows were resplendent with magnificent stained and painted glass, here the light only found access through a small window covered with coarse linen. A crucifix, a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and a skull stood on a shelf. Everything in the place breathed penance and poverty.

"Be pleased to sit down, Lord Count," said the monk, "and pardon me for having received thee in a place so unworthy of thy birth and title. The high and mighty princes of the world do not usually come hither; but thou, though of royal lineage, art suffering, I know, for the Church of Christ, for having remained faithful to the just and holy rights of the Vicar of Christ; wherefore thou wilt not disdain to be seated in this poor cell with a servant of God. Alas! it is the pride and ignorance of people of the world which force the abbots to display all this magnificence; because, in our day, when right rests on strength instead of on reason, poverty, meekness, and Christian humility are despised and trodden under foot. The great possessions of the Church make us the princes of rich and magnificent lands, the fruits of which are devoted to the worship of God and the support of the poor; and yet secular princes despise us, and, if we be not watchful, they would invade us from avarice, and reduce our beloved vassals to servitude; and hence must we endeavor to appear powerful, to have fortified walls around our monasteries and soldiers at our command—not to carry war outside, but to defend the rights of God, our persons, and the patrimony of widows and orphans, the food of the poor and the sick, the peace and safety of all the faithful. It is in the splendid halls through which thou hast passed that I usually receive the barons and great vassals whose fiefs are raised on this monastery; but my own dwelling-place is in my cell, where I weep over my sins and the painful trials of the holy Church through the covetousness and avarice of the great. Some years since, when I was presiding at the councils and debates held in the hall, from the throne of the Abbey, and as the thought occurred to me that at that very time Alexander, the lawful and only Pope, was flying from the fury of the anti-Pope Cadolaüs, oh! believe me, Lord Count, I blushed on seeing myself surrounded by splendor, whilst the Vicar of Christ, a prey to misery, was seeking a shelter far from the Vatican. Now it is the impious Gilbert of Ravenna who endeavors to snatch the tiara from Gregory, and is waging bloody war upon him. I remind thee of these facts intentionally; but thou art too, as I know, under the ban of the Empire, and the states which thou holdest from thine ancestors are in the hands of rebels who are persecuting the Church. But be sure that thou lose not courage. Remember that the Lord never permits man to be tried beyond his strength; he giveth to the afflicted the virtue necessary to sustain adversity nobly, and even make of it a consolation and an immortal crown of glory.

"Thou hast, besides, as I am also aware, another contest to sustain—a contest harder and more painful to thy heart than the loss of thy Count's coronal. I would speak of the dangers which threaten thy Yoland. I know that the Marquis has sworn thy death because thou hast refused him the hand of thy daughter in an indirect manner. However, if the Lord protects us, not a hair of thy head can fall, and Yoland shall escape her persecutor. Providence destines a worthier alliance for her. Znaim, I admit, is not on the lands of the Marquis of Brunn, but it is too near, and thou mightest fall a victim to some treachery. Thou must at once depart for Boleslau, where is the celebrated sanctuary of Our Lady of Help, and thou wilt bring with thee thy faithful and virtuous Adeltrude.

"I have there some powerful and generous friends, and thy residence in that country shall not be disturbed. I will give thee an escort as far as Budweiss, and my people shall precede thee the night previous, to remove all dangers from thy path. To-morrow, at dawn, thou shalt commence thy journey; and as thou hast need of money, here is a purse of gold, and another is held in reserve for thy future wants."

Pandolph seized the hand of the venerable Abbot, and, in the outpouring of his heart, covered it with kisses and tears, thus expressing, better than by words, the gratitude with which he was penetrated.

"Yes, my lord," added he, "it is to thee that I owe my liberty, my future safety. Permit me, however, to recommend to thee once more my beloved Yoland, the only good which remains to me of all that I possess, and of which the avarice of man has deprived me. I live only for my dearest child; for she alone consoles me for all my woes."

"Have no fear," said the monk; "powerful eyes are watching over her. If Ottocar should have recourse to violence, her safety is already secured. That holy child is under the guardianship of the Mother of God, protectress of the innocent, who will protect her with her potent hand. We shall do all we can, that thy daughter be promptly in thy arms and those of Adeltrude. Yet, if that happy moment should be still delayed, lose not courage, and despair not of the divine help. Thou shalt see wonders; for God is faithful."

Encouraged by these words, Pandolph replied: "Last night, being fully armed, I set out for the monastery, intending to bring Yoland and shield her from the pursuit of Ottocar, when, as I came to a solitary place in the midst of the forest which surrounds the plains of Brunn, I was arrested by a mysterious voice from an invisible being, who called me by name, imperiously commanded me to proceed no further on my journey, and warned me of the snares which Ottocar had laid for me. I questioned the voice, and I received no reply; I searched among the trees, and I found no one. I remained mute at this prodigy, and since then I have vainly striven to guess who he was that had thus watched over my path and my safety. Sometimes I said that it was some soul in pain, condemned to wander in the forest till the day of judgment."

"No," replied the Abbot; "those blessed souls are not wandering, as thou seemest to think. It was not one of them who spoke to thee last night. It was a man . . . a man like thee and me—a man who admires thy courage and who loves thee because thou sufferest persecution for justice' sake. I went myself last night to consult him, not far from where he spoke to thee; he told me to meet him at the fountain of Saint Wolfgang."

"But who, then, is he?"

"Do not be uneasy, dear Count; thou shalt know it when the time has come. Now that thou art in a place of safety, thou must think only of thy Yoland."

At these words the Abbot rose, and, as the clock struck, "I must go to the choir," said he, "to sing the Sext and None with my brethren; then, if thou wilt honor my poor table with thy presence, we shall dine together."

The table was laid in a little room on the ground-floor. It opened on a garden-pond; ancient plane-trees surrounded the basin and covered it with their foliage, which dipped into the water. When the clock struck, they brought water for the Abbot and his guest to wash. The Abbot was seated on a wooden stool, the Count on a red velvet arm-chair. In the middle of the table was placed a magnificent group of silver representing St. Benedict seated on a rock. At his feet lies the cup-bearer of Totila, King of the Goths, who, by his master's orders, had passed himself off for him. St. Benedict discovered the imposture, and, turning towards that barbarous prince, he predicted to him the taking of Rome and the day of his own death. The dinner abounded in game and choice meats; it was all served on silver dishes, which lackeys or pages, in the livery of the Abbot, brought to the table from a sideboard loaded with costly vessels. But in the midst of this princely luxury the prelate only took a porringer of barley soup, to which he added a few small pickled fish and a handful of nuts. He entertained his guest in so gracious a manner that he never ceased admiring such learning, wit, and politeness, united with such great abstemiousness. Meanwhile the pages and officers of the household watched Pandolph, whispering to each other:

"Dost know who is that lord? Natheless he is a man of importance; for he is admitted to the table of the Lord Abbot, where none ever sit but margraves or barons of the empire."

"Hum!" said another, "I understand not a word that he sayeth; they are speaking German. He must be some relative of the Abbot."

"He seemeth rather a pilgrim—one of those who go to Rome through devotion; for he journeys alone, without even an esquire."

"And yet he is marvellously well armed. I wot me it is rather a knight-errant who is going to enter the lists for the honor of some noble lady falsely accused. Dost remember that he came hither with helmet and hood on his head, lance in hand, sword and dagger at his side? He would seem to me a valiant champion."

"Verily would it discontent me much to feel the iron of his spear or the blade of his sword. Just look what a hand he has! What a sinewy arm! an eagle eye! . . . the breast of an ox! . . ."

As soon as dinner was over, the Abbot left the table and repaired to his cell, whilst Pandolph, having armed himself again, mounted his horse and spurred it in the direction of Znaim.

The Abbot Daufer had sprung from a noble Thuringian family, and was a near relative of the Landgrave. In his youth he had been a knight of the Emperor Henry III., and was very high in the confidence of that monarch. He had followed him in his Italian campaigns, twice accompanied him to Rome, and oftener still to Verona, where the Emperor had made his residence for a long time during the wars in Lombardy and at the period of the quarrels which arose between the inhabitants of that city and the Lombard lords. During these repeated journeys Daufer had known well, and still more admired, the valor and virtue of Boniface of Canossa. He had been frequently at his court, and had been charged with various missions to him on the part of the Emperor on the occasion of the war of Parma and that of Burgundy. It was thus that he was enabled to appreciate the courage and noble qualities of the Countess Beatrice and the young Mathilda. In the embassies which had been confided to him to the various sovereigns of the West, for the affairs of the Church and the extirpation of heresy, simony, and laxity of morals, which were subjects of great solicitude to the Pontiffs and Councils, he had made the acquaintance of Cardinal Hildebrand (afterward Gregory VII.), and had frequent and important interviews with him. One day, when the knight expressed to the prelate his astonishment at seeing him so pure and holy, so enlightened, and so powerful with the kings of the earth, living, notwithstanding, a life so humble, mortified, and penitential, he asked him, with an air of gentle familiarity, to tell him by what power he had been enabled to unite so much simplicity with so much grandeur, so much sweetness with so much firmness.

"By the power of Jesus Christ alone," replied the Cardinal. "Such knowledge is only acquired at the foot of the cross, and not at the court."

These words, uttered with the warmth of that faith which inflamed the holy prelate's heart, produced such an impression on the mind of Daufer that, on his return from Germany with the Emperor, he bade farewell to the wealth which he possessed, to the friendship of the prince who had raised him to such dignity, and became a monk in the Abbey of Fulda, to the great astonishment of the whole court. He had been, however, its greatest ornament, by his urbanity, the graces of his person and his talents; the life which he there led was noble and sumptuous, his entertainments magnificent, and in the tournaments as in the other trials of skill amongst the young lords of that period he was unequalled.

This brilliant lord, once so fastidious, so elegant, so wealthy, and so gracious, had scarcely submitted himself to the trials of the religious and penitential life than, to the great surprise of all the monks, even the professed, he became a most humble and mortified man. His fair, silky hair fell under the scissors ; his rich and sumptuous garments gave place to a rough habit of coarse cloth ; his fine and carefully-chosen shoes were replaced by sandals of thick leather ; his straight, haughty figure was bowed and humble ; his gentle and pleasant voice was subdued; his elegant and correct language gave place to silence or rare and simple discourse ; finally, his food, his refined delicacies, once so carefully prepared, were now only a few vegetables or some hard bread ; his drink was water ; his couch a heap of dried branches.

Truly is the efficacy of divine grace admirable, which can alone operate such sublime prodigies in man ; it transforms him in a moment, renders him a conqueror over the empire of habit, which, so to say, weakens the body and even the soul. And in reality, how and why is it that the Middle Ages offer us so many examples of these complete transformations of men, haughty, disdainful, violent, and even blood-thirsty, coveting the goods of others, often sunk in effeminacy and voluptuousness? At every step we see counts, margraves, landgraves, dukes, and kings, who, after having consumed their youth in pleasure and luxury, in tournaments or battles, suddenly resolve to become monks, and that in the most severe orders, under the strictest rules, within the cloisters where they were deprived of all communication with men, having to be ill clad, poorly fed, sleeping little, keeping vigils in the choir, and devoting themselves to painful and arduous labors. And yet these men were of flesh and blood like us! Like us, they had a natural inclination for an easy life, amusements, pleasures, in a word, good times in general, neither greater nor less than in our own day. And we, not only are we not accustomed to warlike exercises and the fury of wars as they were—we do not even learn from the example of those brave men to vanquish the natural taste which we all have for rest and comfort. It was, do you see, because these primitive Christians had a pure and lively faith in Jesus Christ and in the last judgment; this faith, united with divine grace, was a goad, giving them energy to conquer the rebellion of their weak and miserable flesh. Do we not see, even in our own days, the power of faith in so many delicate young girls who, though brought up with all the ease and luxury of wealth, tread with a firm step in the narrow and toilsome path of cloister life among the Poor Clares, Carmelites, or Capuchins; and they find there such joy, such inward delight, that their happiness is at its height in vigils, fasts, and the most severe mortifications. Let the apostles of *civilized Christianity* proclaim that austerities are not in accordance with our present civilization; as if Christ had not suffered, as if death were only for those of past ages, as if he had promised to people of modern times that they would obtain eternal glory by walking through delightful gardens, and not in painfully climbing the rocks of Calvary.

After having passed some years under the austere discipline of the Abbey of Fulda, Daufer became so speedily and vigorously developed in knowledge and virtue that he was demanded by the monks of Moravia to be their father and guide in the spiritual life. The Abbot of Fulda consented, and Daufer, having reached his new dwelling, increased there, by his words and example, the spirit of religion. The fame of his learning and virtue soon spread through Bohemia and Upper and Lower Saxony, and caused him to be there held in great esteem. He first devoted himself to heal the principal wounds which were consuming society at that time—that is to say, laxity of morals, avarice, and the tyranny of the great. He succeeded so well—sometimes by paternal exhortations, again by threats—that he soon began to reap in many souls the most abundant fruits of Christian virtue. He journeyed throughout the wilds of Moravia, notwithstanding the many dangers to which travellers were exposed in that country, whether in the depths of the forests through which they were obliged to pass, or from the impetuous torrents which they had to cross.

They also had to avoid the cupidity of certain petty lords, who, from the height of a rock overlooking the way, spied out, hidden in their castles, the unhappy pilgrim whom fate had brought within their reach. From these haunts they sent their minions to wait at the defiles for unarmed travellers, and to rob them of their baggage and their steeds. If the unfortunate victims sought to make any resistance, other assailants, coming forth from neighboring woods, joined the first, and eventually triumphed over the smaller number. Then these latter were made prisoners, put in irons, and dragged to the castle. As soon as they arrived there they were thrown into dungeons hollowed in the rock; there they saw no more the light of day, and soon died of hunger and misery.

Other still more perfidious lords sent their brutal followers through the woods in the disguise of shepherds, hunters, and foresters. These traitors would approach travellers, and, on pretext of showing them the road they should take to reach the city, they would direct them to bottomless marshes, where these too confiding victims were buried, and were then pitilessly despoiled. More frequently these infamous robbers contented themselves with leading away their horses and wares, leaving the poor dupes amid swamps and marshes. These unfortunate travellers, in seeking to disentangle themselves from the snares into which they had fallen, only exhausted the remnant of their strength; night surprised them during their useless efforts, and they perished of cold in the frozen water, or became the living food of wild beasts or birds of prey.

On the rivers or streams, the danger was not less great. If they came to bridges, cruel and rapacious lords had fortified them at either end with bastion, portcullis, and tower, in such fashion that no one could cross without submitting to a heavy toll or to infamous exactions, in consequence of which the baggage, and sometimes even the women and children, were carried off. If the victims were rich, they were retained as hostages, and only released on the payment of enormous ransoms. Where there were no bridges, the boatmen of the neighboring barons would let their barks to the passers-by; then, as soon as they were in the middle of the stream, would let them drift to the foot of the castle, where the travellers were at once pillaged and made prisoners.

These dangers existed in all the countries of Western Europe at that period; but they were to be encountered more especially in Moravia and Silesia, these provinces being still more uncivilized and very remote from the centre of the empire. There the Abbot Daufer, to whom these cruelties and outrages were revolting, seeing himself lord of rich and vast domains, and feeling himself strong enough to impose laws, frequently commanded these audacious barons to leave the ways of communication safe and free, and opposed their violence to travellers. The Church, an ever-tender mother to her children, ordained very severe penalties for the iniquity of these lords. Sentence of excommunication was declared against all those who harassed or oppressed travellers, especially when they were on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, or to Saint James of Compostella in Galicia, or to the Holy Sepulchre. This was, at that time, the only guarantee of security to be had on a journey.

Scarcely had the Abbot Daufer taken possession of his abbey than he forbade the barons and liege vassals of the monastery, and that under pain of forfeiture of tenure, to lay snares for travellers. He further commanded them to restore liberty to the prisoners whom they had taken, and to make restitution of their steeds, their people, and their goods. With the secular barons he acted as mediator together with those of his religious who enjoyed the most credit; and when negotiations, counsels, and prayers had failed, he himself, at the head of his foot soldiers and cavalry, would assail the haunts of these brigands and rescue the sorrowful victims which they contained. This monk, usually so humble and so gentle with every one, would valiantly attack the rebels, besiege them in their fortresses; mangonels, battering-rams, and bastilles then did their work: scaling ladders and those for assault and machines to open a breach were used without scruple, and when the battered walls opened a passage he was the first to rush into the place.

His first care was to fly to the dungeons and rescue from those tombs the unhappy victims who were there pining, restrained by heavy fetters, iron collars, and belts and chains, which were attached to the walls.

These unfortunate people had scarcely anything human left about them, their limbs were so emaciated, their eyes hollow, their beards unshaven, their hair long and unkempt. In these horrible dens some had lost their sight, others found their flesh hanging in shreds from the friction of the irons. There were persons who had become deformed from being forced to bend under the weight of the chain which bound their neck to their feet and did not permit them to stand upright; there they were, just dragging themselves along on legs swollen and inflamed by the damp of the subterranean cells in which they had been confined. Such were the prisons, or rather the dungeons, of the castles of the Middle Ages. Now we see the remains of them, and a single glance makes us shudder. Yet it was in the depths of these abysses that poor travellers languished for long years, for no other crime than that of seeming rich to the cruel tyrants into whose hands they had fallen, and who had hoped to extort from their relatives a heavy ransom.

Daufer could undoubtedly have chosen no work more beautiful and holy. Therefore the modern declaimers, in their ignorance and greediness, cease not to cry out against the riches of the ancient Church, not knowing, because they will not know, with what generosity the bishops and monks devoted their treasures to the service of the afflicted. All the while the worthy Abbot had many other no less important cares, always inspired by his uprightness, his love of justice, and his zeal for truth.

Alexander II. had just been declared at Rome the Sovereign Pontiff of the holy Church. This election was displeasing to unprincipled men. Under pretence that Alexander had been crowned without the consent of the Emperor, they chose an anti-Pope, Cadolaüs, a schemer without faith or honor, who, supported by German and Lombard troops, marched on Rome to force the Vicar of Christ to yield the throne to him.

As soon as Daufer was informed of the new calamity which had overwhelmed the Church, he wrote to the Empress Agnes, to implore her, in the name of the Lamb of God, not to suffer that wicked men should rend the seamless garment of the Redeemer, and cause such a scandal in Christendom—to deign to consider that Alexander, having been lawfully elected, was the true and only Pope, and that whoever was against him was against Christ, the wisdom of God, and eternal truth. He maintained that Cadolaüs was only an intruder who had come fraudulently into the Church through the window, and not by the door; as the wolf glides into the fold to tear and devour the lambs and sheep, so that perfidious robber had stolen into the fold of the Lord.

He begged the Princess to prevent the sacrilegious massacre which was impending, to note, in the goodness of her maternal heart, the blood, the tears of virgins, the prayers of confessors, the cries, lamentations, and despair of all Christians; that it was God himself who placed the sword in the hands of princes for the defence of the Church, the support of the oppressed, the protection of justice, the terror of impiety . . . ; that God would give her the strength which he gave to the arm of Judith, and that all Christendom would, with a common voice, salute her as the glory and the salvation of Israel. He further added, that if the perfidious murmurs of evil-intentioned persons made themselves heard around her, she must not heed them any more than the hissing of venomous serpents, but, on the contrary, renew her courage more valiantly than ever; that her efforts would tend to prevent the young Henry, the hope of the empire, surrounded by the partisans of the Anti-Pope, from despising his lawful pastors, or that, through breathing the poisoned air of disobedience, his faith might become enfeebled, his intelligence obscured, his heart corrupted—lest, once become a man, and having ascended the throne, he might fall from error into error, from obstinacy into obstinacy, with pride for his guide, covetousness for the goods of the Church for his goad, tyranny for his aim, and for his final end the misery of the people who had been confided to him. But the burning tears of the Spouse would fall upon the heart of Christ, who loves and honors her; Henry would never find peace, because God, who reserves to himself the punishment in the other life of the sins committed in this, has the secret of poisoning, even in this world, the days of those who afflict his holy Church.

The secret plots of several German princes, the avarice and the immorality of some ecclesiastics, who feared the just severity of the pious Alexander in regard to their evil conduct, all made Daufer foresee that the noble and upright heart of the Empress Agnes would become the goal of their intrigues. This man of God, rising even more out of himself by his zeal, collected all his energy to combat unceasingly the impious Cadolaüs, to strengthen in their principles the partisans of Alexander, to lead back the wandering, to decide the irresolute, to inflame the lukewarm, and to instruct the ignorant. He became as a wall of iron against schismatics, and intrepidly resisted the assaults of hell, which seemed to animate these unfortunate men to the ruin of the whole of Italy and Germany.

Daufer was accustomed to say that, when a house was burning, it was not sufficient to have the good will to put out the fire and to confine one's self to lamenting and beating one's breast; that one must put their hand to the work, call for help, bring water from all sides, and to pour it on in torrents. The great social crises are never wanting in these sort of people—mourners, and prophets of evil—who, with their hands in their pockets, cease not to cry out: "Woe to us! Unhappy that we are! The world is going all wrong! There is no remedy! . . . ." It is not thus that impostors and agitators go to work; quietly, with little noise, they scheme, they urge, they manœuvre; here they attack one, there they mock at another; they flatter, they threaten and promise, giving themselves neither rest nor peace till they have attained their end. Yes, doubtless, the people have none but good intentions, their minds are upright, but they do not know the trickery of men, and it is precisely by the appearance of truth and goodness that they make them fall into evil and error. Therefore, it was to the chiefs that he must address himself; it was them whom he must enlighten, convince, and persuade. "A single chief may gain you an army, a single chief may make you lose one."

It was with such wise and prudent opinions that the Abbot Daufer visited the courts of princes, the dioceses of bishops, the cloisters of monasteries. Despised here, he tried again there; repulsed in one place, he was welcomed in another; in some he awakened remorse, in others fear or doubt; he appealed to the conscience of this one, he urged on that one the just contempt for the enemies of God and of the Church; he found for every one words of encouragement, of reproach, of light, or of consolation, according to the circumstances, and he even went so far, when the occasion demanded it, as to threaten the guilty frankly and freely with the chastisements of Divine justice. During the whole pontificate of Alexander II. Daufer took no rest, and when Cadolaüs, defeated and pursued by the Romans, had with the greatest difficulty found refuge in the castle of Saint Angelo, the holy Abbot earnestly besought Godfrey of Lotharingia not to let him escape. He, however, succeeded in doing so, but Daufer still pursued him by word and in writing.

A man of such a lofty heart and such activity might justly fear to create enemies on all sides. And yet, he pursued his way intrepidly, all the time using those means that a wise and wary soldier does not reject—despising the wicked, attacking his enemies to their face, defying traitors, as much as possible, and placing in everything an unlimited confidence in Divine Providence, who watches so tenderly over its faithful servants. He often had bitter trials; one day, he fell in among a band of assassins who were waiting to kill him, but who did not recognize him. Another time, the dagger was at his throat; he was delivered without knowing how. Often he traversed countries peopled with his cruel enemies, hearing a price put upon his head, seeing the rewards promised to any man who would deliver Daufer, living or dead, and he never met a traitor.

One time, among many others, he was proceeding to Rottenstein; escorted by twelve men-at-arms, he arrived about evening in a village which had a good inn. He determined to take advantage of it to refresh his people and their steeds; he told them to alight and rest themselves, whilst he continued his way alone to the monastery of the Premonstratensians, which stood upon a hill about two miles from the village. The innkeeper furnished him with an humble steed, and the Abbot, without wallet, or cloak, or arms of any kind, peacefully began his journey. He had scarcely gone a mile when a black cloud appeared above the summit of the mountain; blown by a violent wind, the cloud spread out, and at length dissolved in a torrent of rain, accompanied by fearful thunder and lightning. The Abbot quickened his horse's pace in order to gain a shelter in the ruins of a castle which had been destroyed by the Hungarians at the time of their invasions. The reader who has gone from Velletri to the ruins of the immense castle of Nympha, at the foot of the high rock which served as a foundation to the ancient city of Norma, may, by recalling that region, have an idea of that which Daufer now traversed.

The towers and walls of the fortress were still entire, but the interior presented to the eye only the ruins of churches, houses, and public edifices; in the midst of this rubbish nettles, thistles, and briars had forced themselves a passage; crevasses, dismantled walls; the ivy and the bind-weed here drooped their melancholy verdure, adding to the dreariness of the place. A little brook flowed a little further on, and turned the wheel of a poor mill. The monastery was still distant, and, besides, the rain was falling too violently. The Abbot resolved to reach a crenelated edifice, under the porch of which, to his great astonishment, he found a sort of tavern; he alighted, and fastened his horse to a cart near by. The landlord came to meet him, and with the most gracious manner possible invited him to enter the kitchen, where an immense fire was blazing. This man was, according to the custom of the time, entirely clad in leather; a large belt of buff-skin enclosed his sturdy figure; from this belt hung a long cutlass and a steel to sharpen the knife, which had been blunted by the immense cuts of mutton which he was carving for his guests; he had a coarse bristling beard, and his long wiry hair shone with the oiliness of the grease which it had received. His whole countenance bespoke him an arrant rascal.

While he was drying himself, Daufer discovered, seated around an oak table, half a dozen men of evil mien, with helmets and breastplates, whose lances and shields stood against the wall, and who were eating ravenously, and drinking from a huge jug of beer.

"Come on, comrade," said one of these men to the landlord, in a hoarse voice; "let us hasten with all speed; to-night we shall divide the sum. That will be forty silver pieces that the baron is to give us, if we bring him this Daufer's head. That will be six for each of us, and four for thee. Come on, let us drink."

"But, fool, thou countest without thy host. Daufer has not yet arrived; and, besides, he is accompanied by twelve soldiers well armed with lances. . . . We are only six."

"May the fiend seize thee, thou varlet! and the landlord and his boys, dost count them for naught? Either he will come here and sleep here, and the landlord has up there a room which has a pretty trap, through which others have already passed—thou understandest me . . . ; or he will continue on his road, to repair straightway to the monastery, and our sentinel is up there, to keep guard for a mile around. We shall place ourselves in ambush among these ruins, which we know well, and thence two of us would suffice to slay twenty men before they could recover themselves. Let him only come here, and we shall accommodate him as he deserves—the bird of evil omen who goes round with his wallet always furnished with anathemas and interdicts! . . . Such a blow would be only sport for men of our temper. . . . Let us eat well and drink better."

"How now, fellow, thou at the fire," cried a bandit; "hast met with that night rambler?"

"Of whom dost thou speak?" asked Daufer.

"Of the wolf," replied another, who, wiser than his companions, perceived their imprudence.

"No," said Daufer, "I have seen no wolf of any kind."

"So much the better for thyself and for us," murmured the landlord.

The Abbot, seeing that the rain had abated, paid his reckoning, remounted his horse, and urging him a little, while blessing the Lord who had drawn him out of this dangerous situation, he reached the monastery at nightfall.

CHAPTER VII.

SNARES.

WHILST these things were happening to Pandolph, on account of his daughter, whose hand Ottocar had determined to obtain in spite of all obstacles, the poor child was living in peace, unaware of the dangers which threatened her. Her sweet temper, gaiety, and affability rendered her dear to all her companions, who, with the instinct of youth, divined her sisterly and affectionate regard for them all. They even looked upon her as a prudent counsellor, a protectress, and that without any difficulty, so great was her acknowledged superiority, so clearly was her wisdom and charity shown forth in her looks, her countenance, her actions, and her discourse.

Yoland was the golden clasp that bound together all their inclinations, humors, and varied affections. She had the talent of finding in each of her companions the bright side of her character, which might understand, agree, and harmonize with more unamiable natures. This precious quality won for her the general confidence, and even her mistresses knew how to avail themselves of it for the common good. Yoland had, among other virtues, that quality which is so estimable in a young girl—I mean great fidelity in scrupulously keeping the secret of a friend, the art of making herself all in all without either harshness or flattery, and all the while preserving a noble candor. Whenever she came as peacemaker, even the bitter disputants were certain to become calm at once, to settle their quarrel, and peace and concord were at once re-established.

It was thus, without seeking it, she had made herself the soul of that little world. She managed its affairs, proposed games, and was the interpreter of her companions' desires with her mistresses. She would also adroitly profit by her influence over the pupils to obtain of them more submission to the rules of the house and obedience to the commands of the Abbess. By this means, order became more entire and more easy, the results of study more satisfactory—it is needless to say, to the great joy of the religious. It must not be supposed that Yoland, although charged with so serious and difficult a part, lost even the slightest degree in amiability, but on the contrary. In certain favored souls, there are such attractive qualities that everything in them, even their very silence, has a grace, which pleases, attracts confidence, and commands affection.

One beautiful afternoon, as the young band were amusing themselves under the trees in the garden, Swatiza the Bohemian appeared at the convent, carrying on her back her little store of baubles and jewelry. She sent for Sister Cunegonde, and, assuming an air of modesty and compunction :

"Holy and amiable Sister," said she, "I come from afar, and I bring thee things which would seem to have come out of Paradise; but they are holy and sacred things, and I dare not touch them with profane hands; even the hands of a priest are none too pure for that. But thine, Sister, those of a spouse of the Lord, can they not be touched by such virginal hands? Everything, even to sacred chalices and blessed pals. As for me, let us kneel down in all haste, while dear Sister Cunegonde removes the first covering of the satchel which contains the precious relics."

And so saying, she drew from a leathern wallet a little package covered with linen, under which was a satchel of crimson velvet.

Whilst Cunegonde opened the leathern satchel, Swatiza bowed to the very ground, as if in profound veneration; she remained in that posture till the wallet had been opened and its contents exposed to view. Now, it contained a score or so of beads about the size of an olive, and of a dark color.

"What are these beads?" asked the Sister.

"O sweet Sister," replied Swatiza, raising her head, "that is verily the holiest object that ye daughters of St. Benedict could have here on this earth. Those beads . . . . dost know of what they are made? Well, I will tell thee." And thereupon she prostrated herself on the ground. "Those beads were made of St. Benedict's staff, the one which he used when he had grown old, and on which he leaned. What a treasure, my Lady Cunegonde. One Fulde, a monk (I blush to tell it), offered to buy them of me for twenty marks a piece, but I sharply reprimanded him for his simony, saying, looking severely at him: 'Simoniacal wretch, son of Belial, are those articles of trade?' and I would not give him one. I kept them for thee, for thee alone, and for thy convent, on which these beads cannot fail to bring down heavenly blessings. Oh! make haste, Sister, replace them in their cover; the air itself is not worthy to breathe upon them. Give one of them, I pray thee, to Lady Eribert, and another to Lady Alimburga. It is really by a miracle that they came into my hands. Oh! what a great saint is St. Benedict. Therefore imagine my passing a night in the Black Forest. It was fast growing dark, when a long deep groan came from the thickest portion of the wood. I went in the direction from which it proceeded, and I came to a little clearing where there stood a small cabin, shaded by some fir-trees. On the threshold lay an old man, half unconscious, who was giving utterance to these plaintive cries. I immediately asked him what was the matter. Alas! my dear child, dost thou not see that my left leg is all mangled? This morning, as I was busy digging in my garden, a great fierce bear fell upon me, dug his sharp claws into my shoulder, and tore the flesh of my leg with his cruel teeth. I vainly uttered loud cries of pain; then I dragged myself thither as well as I could, and then my strength failed. I implore thee, my good girl, to aid me in reaching my poor couch, where I shall soon breathe my last, beyond doubt, for nature is overcome by suffering.' I raised him from the ground, and assisted him into his humble bed of straw. These efforts exhausted him, and as he felt death rapidly approaching—'My good girl,' said he, 'I feel that all is over, but I wish before giving up my soul to my Creator to acknowledge thy charity. Dost see a box hanging over that shelf? Bring me that.' I obeyed; and when he opened it with his dying hand—'Seest thou that satchel, my daughter? It contains some marvellous beads, made of St. Benedict's staff. They were long preserved with care in the celebrated abbey of Frising, at the period when the Hungarians devastated Bavaria, and spread fire and blood throughout. They had just pillaged and burned the famous abbey and its church, when a holy religious, who had escaped the massacre and had returned to weep over the ruins of his former home, perceived in the midst of the ruins, among some smoking ashes, the little satchel of red silk which thou holdest in thy hand. He picked it up, opened it, and, to his great surprise, found intact the beads which it contained, together with a parchment on which was inscribed the name of the Abbot of Monte-Cassino, who had made them a present to the Abbey of Frising at the period when that rare favor had been granted. To tell thee how this treasure is now within my hands would be too long . . . ; receive it from mine, take great care of it, and may it draw down on thee all manner of benedictions. Whosoever has it in her possession will have an inestimable treasure, and can never be destroyed by fire.' Thus spoke the old man, then he expired. Prithee, Sister Cunegonde, is not that a miracle? Whosoever wears that satchel can never burn. May we, at least, burn with the love of God! . . . ."

Sister Cunegonde was simple, and somewhat credulous; she took the beads respectfully, considering Swatiza as a saint, and would willingly have kissed the hem of her robes—because, at this period of lively and simple faith, it was easy to abuse the credulity of the people. Impostors carried hither and thither false relics, of which they made an infamous traffic. Vainly the Sovereign Pontiffs, the watchful guardians of Israel, warned the faithful not to trust these shameless deceivers, and only to consider as true and holy the relics which were marked with the seal of the Holy See, of that of the Lateran Legate, of that of the bishops. Therefore it is that Protestants have not failed, and most wrongly, to hold the Church responsible for these abuses; they have accused her of imposing on the faith of the faithful in the relics of saints, while, on the contrary, she has always shown such severity in this regard that it even appeared extreme to enlightened men. But this calumny has no less prevailed. Those Protestants who, in our days, buy, at great price, as Greek, Roman, or Etruscan, bronzes and *antique* vessels, manufactured yesterday in the workshops of Naples or Rome, and who export them to England or Germany as priceless objects of Porsenna, Pericles, and Scipio, exclaim against the Roman Church, whose fault it is not, because some good people of the Middle Ages considered as relics objects which impostors had given them as holy, or as having been brought from the Holy Land by the Crusaders.

When the Bohemian saw that Sister Cunegonde was much pleased with the miraculous beads, she smiled pleasantly, and with an insinuating manner—

"Good little Sister," said she, "would it be possible for thee to lead me to your beautiful young ladies? I have here many pretty little things which will give them pleasure to see, and thou knowest that young girls are curious about these trifles. Come, now, reverend Sister, do me this favor!"

Sister Cunegonde brought her to the garden, and as soon as the pupils saw who accompanied her—

"Here is Swatiza!" cried all of them; "here is Swatiza! O Swatiza! what lovely things hast thou brought us? Whence dost thou come? Hast thou velvet satchels? Hast thou bracelets? Hast belts and ribbons? Hasten, mother, to show us all these things."

Swatiza put forward her chin, closed her eye, compressed her lips, and sent them kisses with her hand.

"My dear young people," said she to them, "ye have never seen anything richer, or more beautiful, or more admirable, than what I have brought ye. Here are purses of embroidered Burgundy damask, jewellery mounted in Venice, a town placed in the middle of the sea like a pearl in a shell; net-work of steel from Milan, all kinds of rings from Grenada, cloth from Trebizonde, Tartary belts, Golconda gauzes, laces from Anvers, painted linen from Armenia, mirrors from Amalfi, enamels from the Pyramids of Egypt."

"What are the Pyramids of Egypt?"

"Little ignoramus! They are Turkish princesses who wear long, wide, flowing pantaloons of muslin."

"Verily! . . . Women in pantaloons? Hast thou seen them, Swatiza?"

"A thousand times, in the country of the Saracens, when I visited the Holy Sepulchre."

"And where is Grenada?" . . .

"In the country of the Moors, beyond the sea. . . ."

"And Milan?"

"That will do; that will do, prattlers."

When the Bohemian had spread out all her tempting wares, the young girls crowded round her like a swarm of bees round honey; one took up one article, the other praised another; this one looked at herself in a mirror, that one tried on a bracelet, put a ring on her finger, a collar round her neck; many of them had more desires than money, all of them asked the price of everything, and, when they knew it, lowered their eyes, bit their lips, nodded their heads, and looked at each other, as if to say:

"I would love to have it, but my purse is empty."

The more daring said:

"Swatiza, my parents are about to send me money; give me credit, I will pay thee later."

"My dears," replied the cheat, "I am only a poor woman, and, without ready money, I can procure nothing for myself. Dost know what I will do?"

And thereupon she lowered her voice:

"If ye have any skirts, chemises, or veils, make them into a parcel and give them to me secretly, and ye shall have a ring or a bracelet in exchange."

Thus did this wicked woman teach them to steal to gratify their whims. Whilst deceiving these poor children, Swatiza was seeking Yoland with all her eyes. She perceived her at a rosebush, which she was stripping of its fairest flowers. Leaving her wares to the pupils, she approached the rosebush, and in one moment made acquaintance with Yoland.

"Happy, thrice happy maiden," said she, "who art busying thyself with trifles, whilst fortune is showering its favors at thy feet. Dost thou see this crown of filagree, studded with precious stones? Dost thou see this bracelet of gold with a carbuncle in the centre? This stone possesses a peculiar property, it shines like a star in darkness; it alone is worth the price of a city. This belt strewn with rubies and emeralds is worthy of an empress: these three articles are for thee. A prince offers them to thee. . . ."

Yoland gazed fixedly at the Bohemian without saying a word. Swatiza continued more warmly:

"Thou regardest me bewildered. Know, my daughter, know that Ottocar, Marquis of Brunn, wishes to ask thy hand. He sends me to pray thee to accept these slight presents. Oh ! dear Yoland, what a brilliant fate is in store for thee ! Ottocar, as thou knowest, is the richest and most powerful lord in Moravia, and the old Duke betrothed him to his daughter Gisela, who brings him as a dowry cities and castles. And yet, he prefers thee to all the princesses of Germany and Bohemia ; he would raise thee—thee, a stranger—to the rank of Marchioness of Brunn, and crown thee under that title. And what sayest thou ? Speak ! what answer shall I bear to my lord ? That thou art happy, rejoiced ? Shall it not be so ? That thou art grateful for these presents, and will agree to his wishes ? Let me only do this, dear Yoland, and he will be overwhelmed with joy when I tell him this from thee. . . ."

"From me," proudly interrupted Yoland, "thou wilt tell him, Swatiza, that I am but a poor child of the people, and that I cannot aspire to the hand of a powerful lord. That, besides, I have a father ; it is for him, and not for me, to arrange my settlement in life according to his rank. That I cannot, must not, accept any gift without the consent of the Abbess ; that I would be thereby doing a dishonorable action."

"O rash and imprudent maiden that thou art ! Is Ottocar, then, a suitor to reject ? Forbear such language ! Accept these costly presents, and let not the opportunity escape ; once lost, can it ever be recovered ? . . . At least, tell me that thou wilt reflect ; that meanwhile thou wilt accept his presents, and the offer of his hand ?"

Yoland found herself in one of those trials to which virtuous young girls are too often exposed, misled by deceit and surrounded by treachery. But these pure souls, though simple, innocent, and inexperienced, receive such light from God that they instinctively perceive the snares which are laid for them, and finally pass through them with a free, light step. And woe to them, indeed, if they hesitate to fly! The noose in which they are to be caught is often so placed that if, instead of boldly cutting it, they seek to unknot and unravel it, it entangles and fastens round their feet in such manner that there is no more hope of breaking it. Yoland, guessing the plans of the Bohemian, overthrew them with a single word. She again repeated that, without the consent of her father and the Abbess, she would not listen to his proposal, and, moving away, she joined her companions.

That time the temptress was vanquished, and left alone with her shame. She quitted the monastery hanging her head, went to Brunn, and presented herself to the Margrave, with whose difficult mission she had been entrusted. He no sooner saw her than he called out from some distance :

"Well, Swatiza, what answer bringest thou ?"

"The best in the world," replied she, "if thou wilt be a man."

"Relieve my anxiety, and tell me if Yoland received my presents graciously."

"Like all young girls, she began to make objections, saying that the Lord of Brunn must address himself to her father . . . . Now, as I am fain to believe, this father is not an idiot, and at the first word from thee he will be transported with joy."

At the Bohemian's embarrassed answers Ottocar felt an uncontrollable anger. He regarded her sternly.

"And what has become of my presents?" said he. "Did she accept them willingly? Did she try on the bracelet, and the crown, and the belt?"

"My lord, . . . it is because . . . thou seest, . . . my good lord, . . . young girls are of that kind that they will be dying to possess a thing and will not let it be seen for all the world. Once they have made a show of putting their father forward, they would seem to hold by that; but . . ."

"But . . . but . . . a plague on thee, thou vagabond! I know not what keeps me from roasting thee alive, thou old ruffian."

As he spoke he toyed with the hilt of his dagger. Swatiza, seeing the storm which threatened her, exclaimed: "Ah! have pity on me, my lord. Send for her father, and thy wishes shall be accomplished."

"Her father . . . her father . . ." replied Ottocar, becoming a little calmer. "He has left Znaim, and no one knows whither he has gone. But what puzzles me the most is that I cannot discover how he learned that I had placed several of my people on his path, to seize upon him, bring him to me, and thus force him to accede to my plans. My emissaries told me, and they had it from good authority, that Pandolph had set out on his way to the convent, to some distant country; but in the midst of his journey he changed his mind and turned rein, so that in place of him my men found only the soldiers of the Abbot Daufer, with whom they had a crow to pluck, and not to their advantage, for several remained there; the others took flight. Wherefore, thou seest, wretch, that Pandolph having escaped me, I can never obtain the hand of his daughter."

"If that be so," replied the wily creature, "cannot some faithful friend repair to the monastery and bring to the daughter a feigned consent from her father?"

This stratagem pleased the young man, and he applauded it, though it seemed difficult of execution. However, inspired by the devil, he said to the Bohemian: "We must at least have some article which belonged to Pandolph, so as to show it to Yoland if she hesitates to believe that the message came from her father. Wouldst thou have the address to procure some such thing?"

"If he left Znaim in haste, that will not be difficult. Give me time to make my way into the house which he occupied; I shall certainly find there some object which he had forgotten or laid aside till his return. If thou wilt take upon thee to find a man capable of acting well the part of false messenger, I will take care of the rest."

However, Yoland's thoughts were in quite another direction. After having abruptly left Swatiza, she went to the Abbess Theotberga and related to her, word for word, all the messages which the Margrave of Brunn had sent to her and the rich presents which he had offered her. At this recital Theotberga, looking affectionately at her, said : " Alas ! my dear child, the Lord has severe trials in store for thee, I fear ; but be assured that his powerful hand will defend thee from all misfortune. The holy angels would bear thee away with their own hands sooner than permit that the evil designs of Ottocar, his imperious character, and the anger which your refusal will excite in him, should become the cause of your ruin. Yoland, thou knowest I have a mother's tenderness for thee ; suffer me to put thee a question which prudence and delicacy have hitherto forbidden me to ask thee. Tell me frankly, answer truly, and doubt not my fidelity in guarding thy secret in an inviolable manner, I solemnly assure thee. Has thy father, Pandolph, made known to thee thy true origin ?"

At this sudden and unexpected question Yoland cast down her eyes, colored a little, and answered : " Mother, I always believed myself to be the daughter of an humble vassal ; yet, I must confess, the last time my father came to see me he took me apart, if thou dost remember, and whilst thou wert conversing with my mother, he said, holding my hand in his : 'My daughter, thou hast reached an age when I can confide to thy judgment and affection a secret which I have hitherto withheld from thee ; reflect that to betray it might cost me my life. Thou must know, then, my dear Yoland, that I have until now concealed my rank. I am not of this country; I am the Count of Groningen, and sovereign of that beautiful country. Thy mother is the daughter of the Landgrave of Hesse, ruler of those vast states. The Margrave of Brandenburg, formerly a partisan of Cadolaüs, as he now is of Gilbert of Ravenna, has sworn my ruin, because I in former times embraced the cause of Alexander, as in these days I support the interests of Gregory VII., the Vicar of God here below. Such is the real motive of the war which he declared against me, and in which I at first had the advantage, though my army was inferior to his; but in another engagement, the Lord of Dessau having treacherously attacked me, I was wounded in the encounter, and, besides, was made prisoner by the Margrave. The heroic courage and devoted tenderness of thy mother enabled me to recover my liberty. My brother Guinigise held the reins of government during my absence; but the Emperor and other German princes who favored the Anti-Pope, vexed at my fidelity to the Holy See, aided the Margrave of Brandenburg in depriving me of my coronet and seizing upon my possessions. Thou seest, my daughter, until circumstances grow better, until the Emperor, returned to Christian sentiments, becomes reconciled with the holy Pope Gregory VII., prudence commands that I live concealed, in order to preserve for thee the heritage of thine ancestors. I have confidence in God; it is to satisfy his justice that I endure these sufferings. I trust the day of deliverance and consolation is not far distant.'"

Yoland ceased to speak. The Abbess then took her in her arms and pressed her to her heart. "Oh!" said she, weeping, "may the hopes of Pandolph never be frustrated by the reverses of fortune and the vicissitudes of time. Thy father, dear child, is a confessor of the living God in the person of his Vicar. Now, those who suffer for justice' sake shall be exalted and glorified, even in this world, according to the measure of the trials and humiliations which they have endured, because God is eternal truth and fidelity, and he has promised that it shall be so. As for thee, my child, who wert born in exile, nourished with the bread of tears, thou shalt yet have happy days, and thou wilt die on a throne. Ottocar would not be unworthy of thee were he virtuous, if, in place of dishonorably laying a snare for thee, he had frankly asked thee of thy father, as all true knights would have done—although, truth to tell, Pandolph would have in any case refused him thy hand, Ottocar being already betrothed to Gisela, daughter of the Duke of Moravia. I will pray and have prayers said for thee, my daughter. Meanwhile, attach thyself more firmly than ever to God; frequently approach Jesus in the sacrament of his love, for victory under such circumstances can be obtained by prayer alone."

The same day that Swatiza had had the interview with Ottocar which we have reported, she repaired to Znaim, and sought to make friends by means of her wares. She went into the houses, gossipped with the women, offering them good bargains, giving part of her assortment for a mere nothing. Therefore, in less than three days she had made friends of all the people who could give her information concerning Pandolph. However, she succeeded in discovering but very little. "One night," said they, "the neighbors heard a great trampling of horses, and on the following day his wife and he had disappeared." Having, nevertheless, succeeded in finding the house which Pandolph had inhabited, she introduced herself to the old woman who had care of it, and by little presents of pins, needles, scissors, and mirrors, she gained her confidence so far as to obtain permission to visit the dwelling. The poor woman, without the slightest suspicion, made her enter, and Swatiza assured herself of the haste in which Pandolph had departed. He had taken nothing with him which could at all impede a rapid journey. The furniture was all in its place. He and his wife had set out on their way like real pilgrims. Vainly did Swatiza seek for a ring or a seal of which she might possess herself. She found nothing of that kind, and was obliged to change her plan of attack. She found herself presently in a little room adjoining Pandolph's apartment. A little bed, a shelf, an ivory statue of Our Blessed Lady, composed the furniture.

"This," said the old woman, "was the room of Yoland, Pandolph's daughter, when she was a child. She is now in the convent at Brunn, and her mother, who loves her tenderly, has always preserved everything here just as you see it, and as if her daughter still inhabited it."

Swatiza wished for no more. Therefore, whilst her companion was opening the door, the Bohemian seized the little statue with a quick movement, and immediately went out. Once free, she made a bundle of her wares, and in all haste took the road for Brunn. Ottocar was waiting impatiently for her.

"And now," said she to him, showing him the sacred image, "now we must profit by this object. Yoland has known it since her childhood."

Ottocar immediately sent for one of the two Spanish magicians of whom we have spoken, men who were, unfortunately, too ready to oblige him in everything. He commanded him to array himself in the garb of a monk of Cluny, then to proceed to Yoland, and to exhort her, in her father's name, to grant him her hand.

The impostor, who, contrary to the usage of the time, wore a long beard, which gave him a majestic and philosophical air, combed it carefully, and divided it into two long locks. He washed his face with the juice of certain herbs, which made it pale and emaciated, and put on the white Capuchin frock. Then, thus arrayed, he took his way to the convent. He presented himself at the door with a modest and devout manner, then, in Pandolph's name, asked to see and speak with Yoland. The portress apprised the Abbess, who sent for the young girl, told her about the monk, and accompanied her to the parlor. At sight of Theotberga the impostor was disturbed, but soon recovered his assurance.

"Very Reverend Mother," said he, "I am from the Abbey of Cluny. Our holy Abbot, the successor of the celebrated Odilon, sent me into Poland to found a monastery of our order there. I stopped for a few days at the Convent of Znaim, with the venerable Daufer, to rest from the fatigues of my journey. Now, I am an old friend, a comrade-at-arms of Pandolph. I spent my youth with him at the Court of Henry III. We were together in the wars of Germany and Italy, where he signalized himself by his valor; but at length God, in his infinite mercy, deigned to show me the vanity of the world. The fame of the Abbot Odilon had reached me. I left the court, abandoned the profession of arms, and devoted myself to serve God in poverty, humility, and mortification. Some years after my profession, our Superior sent me into Norway and the kingdom of the Goths, to spread the faith of Jesus Christ. I dwelt for a long time in those countries. Later, I crossed the seas with some other priests to labor for the conversion of frozen Iceland, which is the ancient Thulé. Alas! . . . venerable lady, such countries! such seas! There dark night reigns for six months of the year; the mid-day resembles the lingering twilight of the late evening. During the other hours it is so dark that lights are required at dinner as at supper, on arising as on retiring to rest, in church as in the market, in the choir for matins as for tierce; and the lights used are only pine-branches, or tow steeped in whale or seal oil."

"What meanest thou, father, by seals and whales?" asked Yoland, who was listening attentively to his strange recital.

"My child," replied the false monk, "seals are large animals which live in the water and on land. They are so long that one of them would fill one side of thy cloister. Their bodies and heads are enormous; their protruding eyes are like two balls of glass; their mouth is so large and deep that one could stand upright therein; their thick jaws are like two gutters reversed, and on each side are six or eight teeth longer than your arm, and they have very short fins. As for the whale, it is the largest fish in the ocean. There are some so prodigious that when they float on the surface of the water they resemble little islets covered with moss. Seals and whales are filled with a white fat, of which oil is made in such quantities that the inhabitants of that country draw therefrom each as many as ten tuns.

"These men make in their foreheads and cheeks circular or oval incisions, which they color red or blue. The more they are painted, the more they are admired and esteemed. They live by the products of the chase, of their fishing, and by the working of mines of iron, lead, or pewter, in which the country abounds, and which forms one branch of their commerce with Norway, Denmark, and England.

"They pass their lives in the midst of icebergs, which storms and furious currents bring and heap on their shores, where they form mountains, castles with crystal turrets, high pyramids, and arches surmounted by tapering spires.

"In the midst of this strange country, numbers of seals are to be seen flying from the white bears, their deadly enemies. These latter pounce on the back of their peaceful prey, bury their cruel teeth in them, and with their sharp claws tear and dismember them to devour their flesh.

"But this is not yet all. My wanderings did not end there. A whaling vessel from Iceland brought me to the far-off shores of Greenland, whose inhabitants are of short, thick stature, with flat faces, and eyes obliquely placed. Their garments are the skins of the white bear; they wear on their heads bonnets of marten-skin, and on their hands gauntlets of rabbit-skin, as white as snow. In their own language, they call themselves Esquimaux, and journey over the ice in sledges drawn by reindeers or swift-running dogs. Their habitations are built of blocks of ice, so hard that though night and day they have blazing fires, yet the walls do not melt. The floor of these dwellings is covered with bison, bear, or deer skin. Some of the cabins have roofs formed of the sides of a whale, over which is placed the skin of the seals, falling to the ground on every side, in the form of a tent; and, wouldst thou believe it, there are already in these countries Christians, natives converted to the faith by the monks, episcopal sees and episcopal churches, just as in Iceland."*

Yoland listened with admiration to the beautiful tales of the false monk; but the Abbess asked herself to what all this long discourse tended, and she begged God to deign to enlighten her. When the impostor had finished the enumeration of all these wonders, which he had heard related by a religious, formerly a real missionary in those countries, he addressed Yoland with an extremely paternal manner:

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* Christianity was, in fact, brought into Iceland and Greenland by monks from Norway about the time of which we write.

"I had no sooner learned that my dear Pandolph was living in Znaim than I went thither to see him. But judge of my grief! . . . I found him in bed in consequence of a kick from a horse, which, without having broken the leg, bruised his flesh so severely that he will be unable to ride for some time. Thou canst imagine the welcome which he gave me on meeting me again after so long a separation. . . . What reminiscences of our youth we recalled! Therefore I did remain at Znaim some days longer than I intended, to enjoy that meeting; but the day before yesterday, when I was bidding him farewell: 'Thibault,' said he to me, suddenly, "before thou returnest to Poland, wilt thou render me the service of a friend? I left my Yoland, my only child, at the Convent of Brunn, to have her educated in a manner conformable to her birth, and as a good Christian, by that admirable woman, Theotberga, who directs that convent with such prudence (may thy modesty pardon me, Reverend Mother!) Now, thou knowest that my friend the Margrave of Brunn, the young Ottocar, met my daughter accidentally. He asked me for her in marriage, but, on comparing my rank with his, I frankly refused; but it was of no avail. The Prince insisted, and in such a manner that I was obliged to yield. Still, I would not abuse my paternal authority; I pray thee, then, to see Yoland, my dear friend, and persuade her to listen to the proposal of the Margrave.'

"Thou seest, my child, that it is unnecessary to discourse any longer to make thee see the advantages of the good fortune which has befallen thee. Thy future husband is young, brave, rich, and powerful; thou art a stranger, favored but little by the gifts of fortune, of birth obscure, compared to that of the young Prince; he gives thee a coronet, he makes thee lady and mistress of so many cities and peoples; what folly it would be to refuse the magnificent alliance he offers thee! Thy father, confined to the house by an accident, asks thee to accept it; he prays thee, by the paternal affection which he bears thee, and thy mother adds, that if thou dost refuse, it will be death to her."

The two women were silent for a moment, when suddenly, Yoland, as if struck by a sudden thought, looked the monk in the face, and said to him:

"But, Father, pardon me the question, what sign canst thou give me that thou art really sent by my lord and father?"

"Thou art right," answered the villain. "Pandolph, knowing that thy prudence is beyond thy years, foresaw thy request, and causing to be brought to him a little statue of Our Lady, to whom thou hast a great devotion, and which stood at the head of thy bed, he gave it to me, saying:

'Bear that to my daughter from me and in my name.'"

So saying, he drew from his wallet the ivory Virgin of which we know, and placed it on the table.

"O dear and sacred image!" cried the young girl, "I recognize thee. Thou wert the joy of my childhood, thou shalt be the consolation of my youth; never more shalt thou leave me. Thou shalt henceforth be my counsellor, my guardian, my protectress, my guide through the paths of this world. O sweetness of my life! O light and love of my soul!"

"How fortunate I am," replied the impostor, "to have brought with me the image of the Divine Mother. There she is, question her. She will tell thee to be submissive to the will of thy father, to the desires of her who gave thee birth, to the wishes of the mighty lord who would obtain thy hand. Now, let us see; tell me what shall I answer the Margrave of Brunn."

"Thou wilt answer," said Yoland, looking at Theotberga, "that I can decide on nothing till I have first spoken to my father."

"Now," cried the traitor, coloring with rage, "wouldst thou be senseless enough, rash enough, to answer the Margrave in such an indecorous manner?"

"Pardon, Father," said the Abbess, coldly, "but Yoland is now giving the answer that all prudent young girls should give in such cases. Even according to thine own words, Pandolph's illness will not be of long duration; he will come hither and see his daughter. In wishing to await the arrival of her father, it seems to me that she neither offends the Margrave nor thee."

CHAPTER VIII.

TROUBADOURS AND MAGICIANS.

No tongue, no pen can describe the anger of Ottocar when he saw his schemes frustrated for the second time. It was the unlucky messenger who felt its first effects: he loaded him with curses, insults, and abuse.

"Marry!" cried the young man, beyond himself with rage, "behold the rare genius which reads the heavens, which weighs the influence of the stars, which directs the planets in their course, and regulates the progress of the sun and moon. Ignorant, unskilful impostor! who couldst not persuade a child nor conquer an old woman. He speaks marvellously well, and makes himself an oracle to fools, who believe in his doubtful science, in his dark mysteries, his diabolical magic, but let some one resist him, and the coward yields and flies. Away from here! take thyself out of my sight. . . I know not what keeps me from splitting thy skull with my axe!"

At first the astrologer was a little disconcerted by this apostrophe, but recovering himself immediately, and assuming a manner at once frightened and assured, he said to his young master:

"I am concerned even to the very depth of my soul, my lord, that I succeeded not in accomplishing thy will, but deign to remember that no one has ever yet succeeded in finding out the secret of conquering the obstinacy of a woman when it entereth her mind to say no. Yea, seeking to make her change her mind is like striving to jump over one's own shadow. Much gentleness and patience are needed with them, and in such fashion must they be taken, and in the end one may overcome without difficulty a resolution which twenty yoke of oxen, or even of elephants, could not have shaken. Try other means. Thy court containeth troubadours and minstrels of great talent. They can sing to the lute or mandoline the sweetest and softest strains. Seek to discover if Yoland's room doth open on the meadow which surroundeth the convent, then do thou send, for several successive nights, one or other of thy troubadours, who will sing to her the most touching of his ballads and romances, especially those which are best suited to thy case. Thou hast here Godevise of Aquitaine, Hildegarde of Lotharingia, who playeth ravishingly upon the harp; then, Cleto of Spoleto, whose song surpasses that of the linnet and the nightingale."

"In truth, thy counsel is good," cried Ottocar. "Swatiza. . . . here, make it thy business to learn if Yoland's windows open on the meadow. Go then to my singers and tell them I would speak with them. That they attract Yoland to the balcony is all I ask . . . and they will find it to their gain."

The Convent of Brunn was situated about a league from the city, in a pleasant though retired spot; an ancient park surrounded it with its thick shade, under which ran a clear and limpid stream, divided into two branches, one of which flowed beside the high walls of the convent and the orchard, and at the foot of the church, and then lost itself in the neighboring meadow. To enter either the convent or the church, it was necessary to cross this moat on a handsome brown stone bridge; and as the keepers of the place took care to pluck up weeds and aquatic plants which grew up around it, nothing impeded the view from the outer windows of the building of the pure waters which ran beneath. The bridge leading to the principal door was movable; the warders raised it after Compline, and only lowered it after Prime. The outer walls were extremely steep, as far as the stone enclosure, above which arose the four immense turrets to the side of the edifice, lit by balcony windows, whence a view of the country, and, in the summer evenings, the cool night breeze, might be enjoyed.

The interior of the convent was immense; it contained, on the ground floor, several cloisters with covered galleries, where, during the winter or on rainy days, when the snow covered the fields, gardens, and meadows, the religious could walk and the pupils take their recreation. Outside of this was the *guest-house,** laid out in spacious apartments, for at that period hospitality was freely given to pilgrims, and a miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin, which was in the convent church, attracted thither every day a large number of them. On one side were the buildings reserved for the pupils; only their parents could enter there, and principally when they came to see a child that was sick; and, finally, still further on, were the apartments of the religious, which an enclosure rendered inaccessible to lay persons, except in the richly-furnished portion which belonged to the Abbess.

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* This was the name given in convents to that part of the building reserved for strangers.

In the halls on the ground floor, three hundred poor persons were received every day after dinner, and soup, bread, and beer, a dish of bacon or of salt meat, were distributed to them.

To accustom her pupils to have compassion on the unfortunate, the pious Abbess often sent some of them to assist the lay Sisters in this work of charity, that these young girls might well understand all the merits which there lay in humbling one's self at the feet of those whom Jesus Christ called his brothers. Theotberga only permitted those whose conduct was irreproachable to go down. Yoland, however, begged so hard, and her behavior was so edifying in all respects, that she had obtained permission to go down every day to these poor women to console and serve them. And, truly, the noble child performed the task wonderfully; she seemed to seek out the most aged, the most infirm, and waited on them with such solicitude as to be really touching.

To discover if Yoland's room opened on the garden, and to know just where it was situated, the fiendish Swatiza addressed herself to one of the poor women who seemed best suited to her purpose, saying:

"Good woman, make it thy business to find out where Yoland sleeps, but be prudent . . . ask her, as if it came from thyself alone, and, above all, let none hear thee; try to tell me, too, on what story and what is the number of her window . . . there are so many! . . .

"Ay, marry, there are, even on the outside—there are as many as days in the year; this convent is so large! Imagine the inside, every Sister has two, and the Abbess more than twenty, it would seem. Dost thou wish to be a religious?

"Aye, aye! the world has but little charms for me, and if I would be received. . ."

"But . . . in truth . . . why wouldst thou, then, know Yoland's window? How would that avail thee? . . .

"Oh! that would not avail me at all . . . still, I will tell thee. The other evening I laid a wager with one of my companions. We were passing along by the walls of the convent, just at nightfall, when the swallows come and go in search of insects which form their food. One of them, whose nest hung from the arches of one of the windows, after flying hither and thither, would return in great haste, feed her little ones, whilst another, flying around in his turn, would come to the same nest, and so on with all of them. Seeing this, I could not refrain from saying: 'I warrant me, that would be the window of Yoland.' 'And wherefore?' asked my companion. 'Wherefore?' said I; 'ah! because it is the window of a maiden so charitable that the swallows themselves recognize her and have placed their nest 'neath her protection. Thou dost not credit me?' 'No—let us wager a cake.' 'Aye! let us wager.' And to assure myself of it, I have had recourse to thee, who seest her every day."

"Aye, I see her every day, . . . and great is her goodness to me! If thou but knewest, she is indeed a pearl of maidenhood. We name her the Angel of Providence, because here she serveth with her own hands, there she doth kindness, and some days she bringeth us the best portion of her own dinner. But canst thou guess what she doth for us whilst the lay Sister brings us our soup? She combs our hair, mends our rags, and even—can I say it?—cuts our nails with her pretty little white hands, and meanwhile we weep with gratitude, and bless her a thousand times."

A short time after this interview, one clear, calm night, just as the moon was rising above the horizon, the sweet sounds of a lute accompanied by a harp were heard among the trees in the park. It was very dark underneath the thick foliage; the palm trees, intertwined, shut out the rays of the moon; not a leaf trembled in the breeze; the ripples of the little stream, which flowed beside the convent walls, seemed to glide more silently, the moon to light up the dormitory windows with a calmer reflection; in the whole neighborhood all nature seemed at rest. After the first chords came a soft and mournful symphony, then a tender and mellow voice sent on the night breeze a song so expressive, so full of feeling, that it went to the depths of the heart.

Whilst the plaintive song was heard amid the trees, accompanied by the sweet and harmonious music of a harp, in the moonlight, several windows were seen to open, and heads were thrust furtively out to enjoy the nocturnal music; but the eighth window, which was that of Yoland, remained obstinately closed. Then the song recommenced, but in a more animated strain.

"Wherefore," resumed the voice, "wherefore, O maiden! wilt thou refuse so brilliant an alliance? Fearest thou that my song will soften thee? Dost thou tremble lest the chords of my harp and lute may render thee less inexorable? This mighty lord is the noblest and the bravest of the young knights of Moravia; none other knoweth better how to curb a fiery courser, or spend his strength in the forest on the path of the swift-flying deer, or guide him in the battle, or reign him in the tournament. No other knight weareth so brilliant a breastplate, so magnificent a crest, nor doth other hand more skilfully manage a sword. He is, in one word, the flower of knighthood, the joy of his court; and yet it is to thee alone that he offereth his hand, his throne, and his jewelled diadem."

And the song went on still sweeter and more harmonious, when, through the shadow of the wood, came a knight clad in armor. He raised his visor and paused to listen, seeming deeply agitated. It was Ottocar himself, who, impatient to know the effect of the serenade, had followed the musicians. But the window remained pitilessly closed, whilst those of the other pupils opened one after another, and even from time to time, on the lower story, appeared the face of a lay sister whom curiosity had attracted, but the eighth window did not open for an instant. Therefore, as the white light of the dawn began to streak the eastern horizon, the band of singers returned to Brunn, escorted by the young Margrave. On the following day, the nocturnal serenade was the subject of conversation throughout the convent, the more so that no one could guess the intention of him who had given it. Yoland listened in silence, but after Tierce she went to the Abbess, explained to her the hidden meaning of the minstrels' words, begging her at the same time to change her room.

The period of which we are endeavoring to give a sketch was full of superstition, to which the profound ignorance of the tenth century had given rise. The people united to a lively faith in Jesus Christ the ancient prejudices of the nations beyond the mountains, whence they had taken their origin. Therefore, as we have said in the preceding chapters, many of these Teuton and Slavic tribes being still new to the Christian faith, retained something of their native rudeness and natural barbarity; they disdained to submit to many of the civil laws, making right and justice consist in brute force, and when this failed them, they did not hesitate to have recourse to supernatural means. It was thus that, in their quarrels, whether public or private, they rendered the Divinity itself the arbiter of their cause, and had recourse to the ordeal of boiling water or that of fire, and to single combat, and this was what they called the judgment of God. Did a quarrel take place between two warriors?—they fought a duel, and he who was killed, wounded, or vanquished was declared guilty. Was a man accused of theft or murder, and was ignorant of the handling of arms ?—he invoked the judgment of God. For that purpose a great fire was kindled, and when the blaze was burning hottest, the accused darted in and rushed through it ; if he came out safe and sound, the people proclaimed his innocence.

The Church, ever gentle and wise, held these ordeals in abhorrence, and earnestly recommended the bishops to teach these rude and credulous Christians that they must not demand miracles of God, that it is tempting him, and that he gave them reason and laws to decide on justice or injustice ; but it was not easy to enlighten these stolid minds and to restrain these brutal souls. The laws not being severe, men despised them ; they preferred to have recourse to personal vengeance, which but too often passed as an inheritance from generation to generation. This is why the Church established the Truces of God, which were times consecrated to prayer and penance, and during which they were forbidden to fight with or kill an adversary. During these truces, all those who took part in a duel, a passage-at-arms, or a judgment of God were sentenced to interdict or excommunication. These periods comprised the whole of Advent, the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, and the holy season of Lent. The neighborhood of churches, persons who went to Mass, and the three last days of each week, fell also under the protection of these truces. They were so much respected, that to disregard them would draw on any one the penalties of the Church and the execration of the people. It was even thought a pious work to pursue the violator, cast him into prison, and even put him to death. The delinquents were banished from their family and their country; they wandered like Cain, bearing with them remorse for their crime, and the fear of being known and punished by every one. And yet many men in our own day say that the Church in the Middle Ages was tyrannical, whilst it is to her alone we owe the mildness of our present customs, the security of person and property, and a tranquillity unknown in those times of barbarism and violence, when the stronger always imposed on the milder and weaker.

From this tendency to have recourse to the supernatural arose, in corrupt minds, the desire of invoking evil spirits, to obtain by their aid the desired object. In those hapless ages, men had more than ever recourse to spells, charms, to magic and the conjuring of the devil. There were men and women who, according to the example of the Pythons and Pythonesses of antiquity, invoked the shades of the dead, questioned the spirits of darkness to know the future, and to compel the devil to annoy their enemies in every possible way. They besought him to aid with his power all those who invoked him, who consecrated themselves to him, or signed a compact with him.

Ottocar, absorbed in his plans, could not resign himself to the thought of being vanquished. He trampled under foot his sworn faith to the Duke of Moravia that he would enter his family, he despised the just anger of his father, his own honor and glory, safety, and the peace of his vassals. Guided by the devil, who possessed him, his mind adopted and rejected in turn a thousand extreme resolutions. It is said that passion is blind; now, one who permits himself to be led by a blind person cannot fail to fall into an abyss. Ottocar, who was a Christian and a sovereign, and according to all laws, divine and human, obliged to punish sorcerers by fiery torments, had recourse himself to these very persons. He again summoned before him the two astrologers, who pretended to be initiated into the most secret mysteries of Arabic science, and thus addressed them:

"Verily, ye are skilful men! I pay ye to aid me with your sorcery, and hitherto ye have given me only words; all your sublime science has been of no use to me. Ye have told me that Yoland would in very truth bestow her hand on me, that she cometh of royal lineage, and it chanceth precisely that she refuseth my alliance, and is of low origin. If ye are men, verify your promises, or I will proclaim that they are but the tricks of impostors. Ye have told me a hundred times that ye had secrets to obscure the sun, rob the moon of her rays, overturn vessels at sea, open the doors of hell, and bring thence legions of demons. Get, ye, then, to work : the moment is come !"

"My lord," replied the impostors, "we will accomplish all thy plans, but if we succeed thou must be of good heart. Thou art a valiant knight, an intrepid hunter, but thou knowest not what it is to fight with hell. Give us three days and three nights, and do thou, for thy part, prepare for the combat."

The two magicians then betook themselves to their laboratories, they set to work with their furnaces, crucibles, alembics, and charms. They collected together coals dipped in the blood of a man hung when the moon was on the wane, and kindled them with a bellows made of the skin of a lamb. They procured the hair of a murdered woman, the left hand of a corpse exhumed by the wolves, some drops of the milk of a dog, a vulture's head, three grains of incense, the skin of an asp killed and burned during the dog-days, some particles of saltpetre, some of mineral salt, and a globule of quicksilver. They mixed one portion of these things, burned another, boiled a third, and reduced the fourth to powder; then, by the power of magic words, spells, and invocations, they charmed and enchanted every thing. Finally, one night, they repaired to Ottocar's room and awakened him from his first sleep, saying :

"Rise, my lord, and follow us."

The ancient castle of Brunn stood on an enormous mass of rocks. At the foot of this pile, just below the foundations, on the level ground, was the mouth of a well which concealed a trap-door of iron. To raise it there was a chain, attached to a great roller, supported by two iron stakes driven into the margin of the well. At the entrance was a pair of stairs without any wall of support, which, in turn, went down into the bowels of the rock on which the castle was built. Having reached the bottom of that abyss, there was a long gallery, formed somewhat like the hold of a ship, on each side of which were low, narrow openings, closed by three large stones, giving entrance to small cells. In these places unfortunate prisoners had been buried alive; here they had died of hunger, misery, and suffering, and their corpses remained fastened to the iron rings and collars which had restrained them, until they rotted, and only the hideous skeletons remained.

It was into this horrible dungeon that the two magicians, furnished with torches which gave forth a dismal light mingled with a thick smoke, now led the terrified young man. They stopped, scooped a hole in the ground with an iron rod which they held, killed therein a black hen, uttering fearful imprecations, and cast upon it some particles of salt and incense, and covered it all over with the earth which they had dug up. They then laid thereon the hair of the woman, the hand of the corpse, the head of the vulture, the skin of the serpent, and with their iron rod they traced on the ground a large circle which enclosed it all. This being finished, they began to clothe the Margrave in his armor, and while adjusting his breastplate and helmet they muttered some mysterious words; they made him enter the circle, and gave him a strong double-edged sword; they lit and arranged around him seven tapers, then leaping themselves into the magic circle with their implements, they began their conjurations, and traced on the ground their cabalistic signs and figures.

Scarcely had they finished their unhallowed rites than the earth with which the slain hen was covered began to swell, to bubble, to groan, and suddenly sent forth a stream of seething blood, which shot up to the ceiling; lurid lightning, accompanied by the rolling of thunder, flashed from the depths of each of the fearful cells which we have before described. The dried bones within them recovered motion, arose, and, joining together, formed frightful skeletons, with ghastly skulls, sightless orbs, whence proceeded streams of fire, whilst their teeth chattered in their empty jaws, and their bony and fleshless hands wrathfully shook the links of their chains. The earth trembled; the air was full of sounds; the pit gave forth a hollow moaning.

Then the magicians uttered, in the Arab and Ethiopian tongues, accursed words, they neighed like horses, barked like dogs, howled like wolves, roared like lions, clapping their hands violently, making contortions, furiously beating the air, taking earth from the pit and flinging it around them. In the centre of the circle was placed a chafing-dish full of burning coals—into this they threw handfuls of salt, which hissed and crackled in the flames, pinches of nitre, which sent out a shower of sparks, morsels of resin, which produced a dense and suffocating smoke. Then came suddenly a profound silence; they raised their hands, pointed to the west with their index finger, and cried in a piercing voice:

"Thou! who art afar! wherefore delayest thou? O mighty monarch! I tell thee . . . it is thee I would see. Why comest thou not? Appear, or I will conjure thee in another fashion than by words. . . ."

Then away at the end of the corridor burst a light so dazzling that all were blinded; it was followed by so fearful a crash of thunder that they trembled lest the roof should fall in upon them; and, behold, from their dark cells dart the skeletons of the murdered victims; their aspect is terrible; furiously they rush towards the three men, seeking to pass the magic circle.

"Strike, Ottocar!" cried the sorcerers—"strike pitilessly with sword and steel; for woe to us if they penetrate into the circle."

Ottocar needed not a second bidding, he struck unceasingly to right and left, backwards and forwards, made thrusts at the heads, warded off the hands which sought to seize him, and the heads detached themselves and rolled on the ground, and the convulsed hands took them from the ground and threw them in the faces of the magicians, and from their wounds issued blood, and fire, and smoke.

"Ay! what meaneth this obstinacy?" cried the necromancers. "What boldness! what rage! Begone, ye accursed! It is not ye we seek; it is Arachiel."

Saying these words, they drew from their wallets two handfuls of iron-filings and threw them at these spectres, who vanished immediately when a particle touched them; in an instant, the cave was plunged in profound darkness.

"Arachiel!" cried the magicians, "Arachiel! vouchsafe to come to us; come and drink. This cup, full of blood which is yet warm, will quench thy thirst: it is the blood of a robber lately put to death."

They were still speaking when a lion suddenly appeared beside them; he advanced with a timid air, and with his fiery tongue licked up all the blood which they offered him, then disappeared.

At this sudden apparition the necromancers blasphemed in their rage, and had recourse to new conjurations, more frightful still than the former; therefore, after some moments, a monstrous and fearful figure appeared at the further end of the gallery, crying in a voice of thunder:

"Woe is me! woe is me! Thy dark art forces me, indeed, to appear, but it cannot compel me to deceive the youthful Yoland. A power more mighty than mine protecteth her—the ring repulseth me, the ring is invincible, and if I still persevered in seeking to conquer her, the ring would be riveted around me, like another fiery chain, for my torment."

"Of what ring dost thou speak, father of lies?

Thy tricks are known to us. Hasten to obey us, or if not . . ."

"I cannot, I tell ye. Anselm's ring opposeth me, Anselm, who maketh deadly war on us, and who gave to Yoland this protecting ring, the stone of which bears a cross as a seal. Yoland weareth it ever on her finger. Who, then, can approach this maiden? Or approach we her, who would dare to attack her? Or granted even that we attack her, who could conquer? . . ."

"Thou liest, for thou knowest well that thou hast already vanquished venerable men who made profession of living entirely according to the cross."

"Yea, but would ye know wherefore I succeeded in vanquishing them? Because they carried the cross without being crucified. They bore, indeed, the cross, if ye will, but they had it not in heart or mind. They wore it as an ornament or for vanity, but, betimes, they despised it in their words or in their deeds. As for Yoland, she acteth not thus, she is pure and just, and beareth the cross more in her heart than in her hand. Anselm blessed that ring, and Yoland's innocence and Anselm's benediction repulse us."

"Craven! where, then, is thy pride which made thy strength? What of all thy vaunts, thou who boasted that thou couldst resist even the tetragrammaton?[*] How canst thou let thyself be vanquished by a poor weak mortal? Who is this Anselm?"

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[*] The three letters, *I.H.S.*, *Jesu Hominum Salvator*—Jesus the Saviour of men.

"Is it indeed needful to inform thee? He is the Bishop of Lucca, nephew of that Alexander II. on whom I waged incessant warfare when he occupied the fisherman's throne, and whom I still pursue in his successor Gregory. Against the first I raised up for adversaries Cadolaüs and the bad German and Lombard priests; to the second I oppose Gilbert's pride, the evil lives of some of the clergy, and the avarice of the nobility. The perfidious Anselm defeats me in every encounter with the spiritual weapons of his uncle; he snatcheth from me, at every instant, the most precious conquests which I have gained within the sanctuary. Not content with having deprived me of them, he exhorteth them in such fashion that in their turn the traitors become my enemies, and rescue a number of people whom I retain captive in the shackles of sin. But I have returned him in ample measure all the evil which he hath done me. He took away my prey, I admit, but three priests, inspired by me, brave and determined men, who are besides supported by powerful factions, deprived him of his bishopric and had him banished from Lucca. Still—would ye believe it?—he doth not hold himself for vanquished, and with the design of insulting me still more he hath taken the monastic habit. He hath redoubled his austerities, vigils, and fasts, by his prayers and example hath taken from me more partisans even than by his discourse. May the lightning blast the wretch!

"This is not yet all. Gregory, just when reduced to the utmost distress by my efforts, made him the confessor, director, and counsellor of that infamous witch whom they call Mathilda. O rage! . . . Anselm giveth her neither rest nor peace; he prayeth, he urgeth, he inspireth Mathilda to make cruel war upon me; she alone defeateth and overthroweth all my plans. I snatched the young Prince Henry from the hands of the Abbot Odon; he would have made him a pure and devout man, submissive to the Holy See; I confided him to the guidance of certain mighty barons, my vassals, my faithful servants, who in that still tender soul have sown those errors of mind, vices of heart, which produce fruits very sweet to my taste, and still more flattering hopes for the future. My friends have exceeded my hopes; under the specious pretext of the inalienable rights of the crown, they urge him obstinately to retain possession of investitures, and to sustain an Anti-Pope against Gregory. But what!—did not that miserable Anselm prove to Mathilda that Gregory is the lawful Pope, and thereupon this woman, by means of letters, messages, tact, and negotiation, hath almost succeeded in leading the German Princes to abandon the cause of Henry IV., and even, in part, to reconcile Henry himself with Gregory.

"Ye are aware that the Germanic Empire is not hereditary, like other kingdoms or states. It is electoral, and was created by the Pope for Charlemagne, on condition that he would defend the Church and maintain peace in Western Europe. Another Pope created the Electors and gave them this appointment of the imperial election. Now, Henry, who is not destitute of a certain wisdom, reasoned thus: 'If my election is entirely the work of the Pope, and if, in exchange for that benefit, I quarrel with the Church and disturb the West, the Sovereign Pontiff can depose me and cause another to be elected in my place.' This thought maketh the Prince incline towards peace, to the great joy of Mathilda and Anselm, and in consequence, I lose in this manner thousands of souls whom I already considered my own property. It must be confessed that this Anselm is a plague to me; wheresoever he interferes, no matter how trifling the cause, things go not well in my regard; and judge, therefore, if I can undertake aught against Yoland, who weareth on her finger a ring blessed by this man. And, mark well that he knoweth her not, hath never seen her. He once gave this ring to a monk, who gave it to a strange hermit, a friend of that old dog of an Abbot Daufer, the secret, but, alas! all-powerful protector of this Yoland. As soon as he knew the designs of Ottocar, he secretly sent, through the medium of Theotberga, the ring blessed by Anselm, in order to defend her against all charms and snares."

At this revelation, the two magicians looked at each other in consternation; they felt their courage failing. Still, to put a good face on the matter, they resumed:

"Arachiel! valiant champion of hell! be not discouraged, let not thy heart fail thee, collect all thy forces, sharpen thy wits, assemble all thy confederates, in a word, aid us with all thy resources; we depend on thee."

"Friends," replied the demon, "I can do naught against her, be assured of that; all that I can do is to torment her with phantoms of terror, to raise up enemies and rude combats. Beyond that I may do naught."

He ceased, and immediately disappeared with a horrible noise, emitting from all sides a shower of stones and splinters of rock, and filling the dismal place with a dense sulphureous smoke.

Entirely absorbed in their hellish rites, the two sorcerers had not noticed Ottocar; they turned towards him, and found him pale and breathless. His hand had unsheathed his sword, his knees were shaking under him with terror, his staring eyes, open, were fixed, and vacant with fright and stupor.

They hastened to render him assistance, rubbed him with vinegar and spirits, so as to restore him to consciousness. The unhappy young man at length came to himself, but he looked haggard and bewildered, as if a thunderbolt had fallen on him; he tried to rise, but he fell back in a faint.

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPTATION AND VIOLENCE.

THE night was dark and disturbed by one of those tempests which so often occur during the summer in the southern parts of Europe, accompanied by lightning and thunder. Yoland, startled from her sleep by a fearful peal, trembled, and, sitting upright, remained motionless with terror. A thousand distressing thoughts had filled her mind during the last few days, because she had learned that her father, having left his house and closed it up, had departed hurriedly from Znaim with Adeltrude, her mother, without saying whence they were going nor when they would return. The Abbot Daufer had secretly communicated this news to Theotberga, who had transmitted it to Yoland, that she might return thanks to God for having preserved her from falling into the snare of the false monk.

This last incident deeply afflicted her; she connected it with the insidious words of Swatiza, the concerts which had been given her during the night, and she saw clearly that the young Margrave of Brunn was firmly resolved to use every artifice and stratagem. She said to herself that her father's departure left her almost at the mercy of this infatuated man, and that the prudence of Theotberga, the affection which she bore her, and respect for the holy place in which she dwelt, were, after all, but a feeble protection. These reflections oppressed and saddened her mind, and filled her with despondency; and yet, at times, a sweet feeling would come over her which consoled her in her sorrow and dispelled her sadness. She had before her eyes her little statue of the Blessed Virgin—that image which she had so unexpectedly received, and as the false sign of a perfidious and sacrilegious plot which Mary herself had so miraculously exposed.

"O my beloved Mother!" said Yoland, clasping the holy image to her heart, "thou who wert the first confidant of my young affections, who didst receive with such goodness my childhood's lisping prayer; thou who didst guide my trembling steps, who didst inspire me with a salutary fear of God, and a pure and tender love of our Lord Jesus Christ, oh! I beseech thee, abandon me not in the trials which await me. Thou knowest my ignorance, my weakness, and my loneliness; be to me a clear light, a powerful protectress, and a tender mother. It is in thee I place my hope and my safety; suffer not that which is called my beauty to be a cause of sin to my neighbor; and rather than permit that it should offend God, let it be lessened by sickness, disfigured by sorrow, or let it disappear in death."

Whilst Yoland thus prayed with fervor and tenderness, and at each flash of lightning or peal of thunder pressed the venerated image more affectionately to her heart, she saw, or rather thought she saw, all at once, after a vivid flash of lightning, the farther end of her room opening, as if the wall had been removed. A gloomy wood was before her, and therein she saw a young man walking pensive and sad. It was Ottocar. At this sight Yoland's heart froze with terror, her blood stopped flowing, a cold sweat covered her forehead; she trembled violently in all her limbs, which seemed as if turned to ice. She would have flown, but she felt as if nailed to the bed; she would have screamed, but a hand of iron seemed to stifle her voice in her throat; she would have turned away her eyes from this sight, but the gloomy wood and Ottocar's image pursued her everywhere, in spite of herself.

Suddenly a noise is heard in the foliage; it increases, it comes nearer, and she sees an enormous bear coming out of the foliage; with glaring eyes and his teeth gnashing, he falls upon Ottocar, seizing him in his dreadful claws. Although taken by surprise, the knight draws his sword, puts himself on his guard, and tries to defend himself; but the spring which the fierce beast made upon him was so sudden, the place so narrow, the ground so covered with thorns and briers, that the young man trips at every step and cannot advance; the bear becomes infuriated, and, burying his great claws in his adversary's breast, he tears him, drags him to the earth, and tramples upon him with renewed blows. Ottocar falls to the ground, and the victorious beast retires to the depth of the forest. Stretched on the ground, pale, dying, the wounded man calls upon Yoland, who hastens towards him, touched and filled with pity. He shows her his wounds, from which streams of blood are pouring; he begs her to wipe away the sweat which stands in thick drops on his forehead, to close his eyes, and to receive his last sigh.

At this sight Yoland is moved to compassion; her heart beats, her breath fails, and she is about to render to the dying man the melancholy services which he asks. The effort which she makes restores her to herself. The image of the Blessed Virgin has slipped away from her; she seeks it, groping about on the bed, finds it, presses it tenderly to her lips, and raises it to her forehead to make the sign of the cross; but she has scarcely done so than the terrible vision disappears, and she finds herself sitting up in bed, calm, composed, and tranquil.

Another night she was suddenly awakened by a deep groan beside her bed. She opened her eyes. . . . Great God! what a sight! . . . Pandolph is Ottocar's prisoner: he kneels and extends his supplicating hands, loaded with chains. Ottocar is beside him, holding him by the hair with one hand, and with the other brandishing a dagger. His eyes are wild, his voice furious: "Pandolph!" shouts he—"Pandolph! grant me the hand of thy daughter, or I will bury this iron in thy heart." The unfortunate victim seeks in vain to soften the infatuated man; he looks at Yoland with a despairing glance, and seems to say to her: "Thou seest, my child, thou must decide to give him thy hand, and by that means to save my life; or, if thou persistest in thy refusal, thou must prepare to see me slain before thine eyes!" This cruel spectacle—a father's danger, his beseeching looks—agitated Yoland to the very depth of her soul; she was about to dart forward to arrest the murderer's arm and cry, "Stop!" to the assassin. . . . But as she attempted to leave her couch, she signed herself with the little statue . . . and it all disappeared in an instant. Yoland came to herself; she was bathed in an icy sweat, and was so weak that she could scarcely support herself.

These visions were the work of Arachiel, the demon evoked by the two magicians. But Yoland knew not to what cause she must attribute these painful apparitions. She was seized with melancholy; she abandoned herself to her grief, seeking solitude and silence, and often feeling a palpitation, an anxiety, and an oppression on her heart which greatly alarmed her. Vainly did her companions endeavor to cheer her; vainly did they seek to make her share in their games or their walks; she, who was usually so ready, so affable towards every one, had become gloomy and morose, because strange things frequently occurred to her. When in the midst of her friends, these young girls would suddenly change to her view, their forms and features taking a thousand odd and fantastic ones. If she were conversing cheerfully with one of them, her companion would suddenly disappear to give place to Ottocar, who would beg her to give her consent. Another time the pupils would become a band of soldiers surrounding her on all sides, and, sword in hand, dragging her violently into the Castle of Brunn. One day it would be Pandolph, the next Adeltrude, her mother, who appeared to her, embracing her tenderly, and conjuring her to deliver them from the bondage in which they were held by Ottocar; they would show her the chains with which they were loaded, and from which they would only be released when she had consented to this fatal union.

Poor Yoland would then fly, completely bewildered, to the cell of the Abbess, throwing herself at her feet, asking help and protection, and taking shelter in the folds of her veil, as the child runs to its mother and hides in her skirts when it is frightened by the barking of a dog. Theotberga, more pained by her condition than she was willing to admit, would console her, saying that the devil alone was the cause of her trouble; that she must not lose courage before the wiles and cunning of the angel of darkness; that the power of God was with her, and would bring her out victorious from all her trials; that for the rest, she must pray a great deal, make an entire offering of herself to Mary, the sweet Mother of Jesus, who would place her beneath the protection of the divine mercy.

"The ring which thou wearest on thy finger," would she add—"that ring blessed by Saint Anselm, the intrepid champion of Holy Church, bears a cross engraven on its seal—a cross! . . . the terror of demons, the shield, the defence, of faithful Christians—that cross alone will avail thee as much as the help of ten legions of angels. It is impossible that hell can prevail against thee, spite of its united efforts."

Reanimated by these words, Yoland would hasten to the church, and there, all alone, would prostrate herself before the Blessed Virgin's altar, offering to her her heart and all the powers of her soul, and not arising till she felt herself encouraged and filled with hope for the future.

After the terrible night of evocations, Ottocar was brought back to his room by the two magicians; the last apparition had been so horrible that he could not banish it from him. He was depressed in spirits; his limbs were languid and powerless; his whole being was in a state of complete prostration. A burning fever seized upon him, his blood boiled in his veins, his mind wandered in a violent delirium. In the morning, when his servants came to him, they found him stretched on his bed, his eyes fixed and glassy, his mouth open and covered with foam, his hair erect, his hands clenched, his body stiff and icy. They threw water in his face, rubbed his temples with vinegar and spirits; he came to himself a little, gave a deep sigh, then, suddenly raising himself like one possessed:

"Back!" he cried, "away! ye cannot enter this circle, it is sacred; avaunt! ye animated skeletons; away! or ye shall feel the point and edge of my sword! Come hither, Arachiel, stupid brute! art thou not ashamed of thy cowardice? . . Ha! what keeps thee back? . . . The ring, the ring, sayest thou? Ha! wretch, where, then, is thy power? I alone suffice; I fear no rings; where are thy soldiers? . . . Hither, Sans Pitié, Loup-Garou, Confe-tête; men like these with thirty followers would snatch the gates of hell from their hinges, and seek thee to repay with halberd-strokes the cowardice which thou hast shown us."

And thereupon, Ottocar, enraged, would throw himself like a tiger upon the assistants, who were obliged to repulse him and to hold him down, without guessing the cause of his blind transports.

It is impossible to have any communication with the devil without having to suffer great evils in consequence. Ottocar recovered from his mad terror and frenzy after some days. But his mind became utterly a prey to that infernal fever which, having first banished the grace of God, held him entangled in the meshes of Satan, and urged him to new falls. The transports of rage which sometimes seized upon him made him blaspheme God and curse men; he uttered imprecations against himself; he gave himself to the devil with horrible oaths, and seemed already to have become his slave and his prey. And, indeed, the evil spirit soon whispered to him the infamous project of abducting the young girl from the shelter of the cloister. Vainly did the voice of his angel guardian make itself heard in the depths of Ottocar's heart, representing to him the remorse which awaited him and the horror of such a sacrilege; the demon of pride and obstinacy made him deaf to all his representations, and so completely obscured his understanding that a ray of clear light could not find its way into this tempestuous and darkened soul.

On the road leading from Brunn to the convent was a tavern where travellers were wont to refresh themselves with a pot of beer and a slice of bacon. One day (after Vesper time) a strong troop of soldiers, armed with cross-bows, lances, and iron hatchets, stopped at this inn, whose walls, lined with shelves, were soon well garnished with all these arms, whilst the tables were covered with glasses and jugs. The landlord was a man nearly six feet high, with long, disordered hair covered by a pointed cap of lynx-skin, which still further increased his height. His tunic of fur was girded at the loins by a leather belt, bordered with red, to which were attached a formidable cutlass and his carving-steel. His wife was, on the contrary, short and dumpy; she wore on her head a bonnet of turkey feathers, which, from being exposed to the smoke and steam of lard and fat, were of a light-brown color; her hands and her whole person were oily, greasy, and shining like a barber's razor-strap. This couple had a son, a tall, thin, gaunt lad, who, however, knew how to read a little, which was a thing very rare at this period; he had been, from his earliest years familiar with the Convent of Znaim, and had learned his letters in the psalm-book of Brother Gontran, cellarer of the Abbey. Recalled by his father to assist him in the service of the inn, he became, so to say, the Solomon of the neighborhood; and as the monks of the Abbot Daufer had upheld the cause of Gregory, the lawful Pontiff, the brave Rutald had done likewise. He espoused his cause on all occasions, and proved to all who came that if they would live in the community of the Church they must submit to Gregory and hold the Anti-Pope as Antichrist. In that Rutald showed himself very different from the young men of our days, who, after having spent some time in any city whatever to learn chemistry, veterinary medicine, or the laws, return to their native place accomplished professors of irreligion, immorality, and revolution.

Whilst the soldiers were emptying large pots of beer and doing away with half a roasted sheep, the hostess, quite flurried, waved the plumes of her bonnet from kitchen to cellar, and cellar to hall, throwing out here and there some cheerful remark to the company. The landlord, on his part, seeing that his customers were becoming animated, leaned his elbows on the table, his chin in his hands, and began thus :

"I would fain know, indeed, who could stand against ye, my gallants ? Ye are the most famous marksmen of the neighborhood, they who strike the stoutest blow. . . . Ye are out for work to-night, I wot me ; and they who would bar your passage will feel the point of your lances or the weight of your battle-axes."

"Oh ! as for the little nuns, they will give us small trouble, and we shall waken them from their slumbers without much work," said one of the ruffians, already more intoxicated than the rest.

"Marry !" added the host, looking at his son, "thou art, natheless, in pursuit of some Gregorian * who has taken refuge in the monastery?"

"What! . . . a Gregorian . . . No, i' faith . . . it is a little Gregorian damsel whom we want. What labor we shall have! Marry! we shall find her like a bird in her nest; I will hoist her on my shoulder, and bear her straightway to the castle."

"And," added another, "if a fine large silver reliquary should be lying hither or thither, we shall speedily place our hand upon it. The nuns are rich; and, besides, it is all fair prey, for they are all Gregorians to the marrow of their bones."

"Viva! bravo!" shouted the master of the house, whilst making a sign of intelligence to his son.

Rutald understood it, went out immediately, and taking to his heels he hastened by cross-paths to the mysterious personage who, from the depths of the forest, had commanded Pandolph to arrest his course to avoid the snares of Ottocar.

Six men had already gone forward to construct a raft on the moat which surrounded the convent. This raft was to bear the ladders with which they were to scale the balconies. Four other wretches dragged these ladders after them, and in case of need were to lend a hand. About ten o'clock at night the minions of Ottocar, inflamed with a courage found in their glasses, set out in great disorder. They did not come in sight of the convent till after midnight. The raft, set in motion by

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* The partisans of Gregory VII. were thus named.

means of long oars, advanced slowly beneath the walls of the vast edifice from the part of the building reserved for strangers. The ladders, having been placed, were found some feet too short; they would not reach Yoland's windows. This obstacle had to be overcome, and they strove to lengthen the ladders by means of ropes and pieces of wood. This took some time, and could not be accomplished without some noise. Some lay Sisters who slept on the ground floor were awakened by the repeated blows and the voices of the workmen. One of the bravest ventured to thrust her head a little through the grating, and perceived the reflection of arms and the black bulk of the scaling-ladders. She rushed into the dormitory, screaming and calling out:

"Help! help! the enemies of God are attacking the convent. . . . They have crossed the moat; they are firing on the walls with battering-rams and mangonels; . . . they are already mounting to the assault; . . . they strike the walls; . . . whither shall we run? . . . whither fly? . . . We poor spouses of the Lord! . . . stricken doves! . . . Hearken to their shouts. . . . Death! . . . death! cry they. Mother Abbess, Mother Prioress, Mother Cellarer, where are ye? . . . O my God! . . . they will slay us all."

By these cries, lamentations, and the tumult, the young girls who slept on the upper story were in turn awakened. The noise surprised them, the clamor terrified them; they also trembled, screamed, and darted out of their beds, dressing themselves hastily, but not daring to go out of their rooms. The bravest and most curious opened their door, but the darkness of the corridors forced them to go in again; some bolted the doors, others joined those who were weeping, and wept too. One asked what was the matter; another answered that there was a fire in the convent, and all of them screamed: "Help! . . . must we be burned alive? Help, Blessed Virgin! . . . Where is the fire? . . . In the nuns' quarter."

The religious arose from their hard beds, and as they slept in their habits they were in a moment around the Abbess; but Sisters Cunegonde, Eriberte, and Galswinthe, who had charge of the boarders, and who, therefore, slept in the dormitories, came with their lamps, endeavoring to calm the general terror. The place was then lit up; their clothes brought to the most frightened; those who were still asleep were awakened; the most terrified were reassured. Every one asked questions at the same time:

"The enemies are in the convent. . . . No. . . . Yes. . . . The lay Sisters saw them. . . . Where? . . . There. . . . In the guests' quarter. . . . Alas! . . . They will slay us . . . drag us into slavery."

And the cries, moans, and lamentations began anew. The wise Theotberga understood at once whence came the alarm. Moravia was in peace; there was no enemy abroad in the country. Counts and Margraves were taking care of their own states; it could only be the Lord of Brunn who was attacking the holy place. Filled with just anger, and in great alarm, she hastily repaired to the pupils' dormitory. There she found Yoland already dressed, holding in her hand the little image of Mary, and endeavoring to encourage her companions by recommending them to have confidence in God and his Holy Mother. Without, the noise increased. The ladders were at length mounted and placed at the balcony of Yoland's room. However, as we have said, the projection of one part of the wall prevented the ladders from being steady; they were not straight, and did not rest against the wall above. The assailants, in their love of pillage, despised the danger and rushed forward all at once. The ladders trembled and bent beneath their weight. Those who were below pushed and hurried those who preceded them. Every step of the ladder bore a man, and trembled beneath his weight. At length the most daring were about to step on to the balcony, when, all at once, the overloaded ladder strained and broke. The lower part of it fell suddenly against the wall, and remained there with those who were upon it; but those who were above fell backwards, and were thrown with the pieces of wood into the moat or on the logs of the raft, where they lay bruised, mangled, and unconscious.

At this noise and their shouts, the nuns imagined that they had entered the convent, and in their alarm they ran in all directions through the cloisters. Then the Mother Abbess gave the signal to assemble in the choir, that every one might be together in the church.

"These wretches," said she, "may perhaps respect us on account of the sanctity of the place; or if they dare to place their sacrilegious hands upon us, then we shall at least fall innocent victims of their fury at the foot of the holy altars."

At the sound of the bell, they all hastened to the church, and prostrated themselves before the statue of the Mother of God.

"O our blessed protectress!" said Theotberga aloud, "have pity on the spouses of thy divine Son! Suffer not that his beloved children fall beneath the claws of the lion; permit not that these doves fall a prey to these infernal vultures; save us that we may still sing the love and the glories of the divine Spouse; and if Jesus demands us as victims, bring us at least into his presence pure and stainless."

Meanwhile, the besiegers had drawn their dead out of the moat; they carried the wounded to the opposite bank, then, seeing that they must give up their attempts at scaling the walls, they resolved on another plan. The pieces of the ladder were fixed against the walls, two strong beams were taken from the raft and transformed into a battering-ram; then, collecting all their energies on one point, they sought to make a breach, hoping thus to enter the sacred asylum. Their repeated strokes sounded mournfully through the vaulted arches of the convent and church; the chapels and choirs re-echoed them, and the very foundations of the vast edifice were shaken. The poor women felt, so to say, as if every blow fell on their own hearts; they tremblingly invoked God, the Blessed Virgin, Saint Scholastica, and Saint Benedict. At sight of their despair, Theotberga's courage arose. She exhorted them to have confidence in God, and bravely sustained them by declaring that the assailants would find the walls of Sion harder than bronze or the diamond. "May the angel of the Lord arrest the blows with his shield, and break like glass the devastating weapons!"

Having taken refuge in the church with the others, Yoland understood that she was the secret cause of this aggression, and that she was consequently in greater danger than any of her companions; she even felt that, in case they succeeded in entering the convent, no one would suffer except herself, whom the ruffians would drag away, God knows where. Still, her inward confidence in the little statue of the Blessed Virgin whispered that Mary would not suffer her to be abandoned to the mercy of these devouring wolves. As soon as she entered the church, she whispered to Theotberga:

"O mother! reassure the Sisters and my companions; all this tumult concerns me alone. Pray to God that he may not forsake me."

Then she immediately retired between two pillars behind the miraculous statue, to whose feet came every day the crowd of pilgrims and obtained so many signal favors. Prostrate before the sacred altar, she poured out her soul in acts of filial confidence to Mary; she placed herself, the Sisters, and her beloved companions under her powerful protection; it even seemed to her that the Queen of Heaven said tenderly to her:

"Cease to fear; I will save thee. . . ." All at once she felt herself assailed, more violently than ever, by the evil hallucinations to which she was a prey. She imagined herself, in a moment, transported to the depth of a gloomy forest, which a fire was rapidly consuming; she saw the flames surround and envelop her on all sides; wreaths of fire and smoke enveloped her, and a violent wind drove them towards her. Horrible dragons came writhing out of the flames, with fiery jaws ready to devour her. At this fearful spectacle, the poor child felt herself frozen with terror; she ran hither and thither, and sought some means to escape from this labyrinth. She seemed to discover an opening on one side; she rushed forward and sought to fly. . . Suddenly Ottocar appeared before her; at this sight Yoland stopped, recoiling in horror, and sought some other mode of exit. . . . It was in vain. The roaring of the flames increased more and more, the trees around her were enkindled. . . . What was she to do? . . . what was to become of her? . . . She felt the devouring flames. . . . A mortal anguish took possession of her. . . . She was, it seemed, dying. . . . Just then she seized, without thinking, the holy image which never left her; she carried it to her forehead, to her heart. . . . The flames were extinguished . . . the forest disappeared; Ottacar had vanished like a shadow. Yoland breathed again; feeling herself delivered from this frightful vision, she joyfully raised her grateful eyes to the altar. Still, the dreadful blows which shook the walls, the weeping of her companions, the thought that perhaps she was about to see the assassins rush into the church, fly furiously at the servants of the Lord, slay them at the foot of the altars, make their virginal blood flow over the pavement of the sanctuary—all this so strongly excited Yoland's imagination, she was seized with a nervous trembling. But all at once a secret door in the wall opened behind her, a vigorous hand was placed upon her mouth, another laid hold of her, raised her quickly, closed the door, and Yoland felt herself borne away rapidly through the utter darkness.

Still, the strokes of the battering-ram were redoubled, and the breach began to open. Suddenly one of the fiercest of the assailants fell from the height of the ladder, struck by a crossbow hurled by an invisible hand. He was followed by one of his companions, then another, both severely wounded. It was dark; the brigands stopped, looked all around; they heard the whistling of the fatal darts, and could not discover the arm which threw them. They were filled with astonishment, then terror, and seeing no enemies they began to whisper that it was the angels, who, in punishment for their sacrilegious attack, were now wreaking upon them their heavenly vengeance.

The reader has not forgotten that Rutald, the innkeeper's son, having guessed the designs of Ottocar's minions, had gone forth in all haste to warn that person who alone could bring assistance to Yoland. On returning from this mission, he went into the neighboring hamlets inhabited by brave men, stout hearts, who were hostile to the Anti-Pope.

"Up, comrades!" said he; "up, take arms, and follow me! Come to defend the convent of Saint Mary, which impious men are perhaps even now attacking. They would bear away a young and virtuous maiden, do evil to the spouses of the Lord, and pillage the treasure of Our Lady; by hastening, we may fall upon them before they shall have time to scale the windows and penetrate the walls. Let us see that not one escapes, for these ruffians are but the instruments of tyranny and injustice."

No sooner said than done. The good people armed in all haste, took their bows, crossbows, lances, spears, and advanced, new combatants increasing their numbers at every step. They silently reached the woods which surrounded the convent, advanced to the edge of the moat by the aid of the trees which grew on its bank, and thence sent a shower of darts and arrows upon the assailants, who, struck from behind, slipped from the ladders and fell into the water. The soldiers of Ottocar, seeing themselves attacked in their turn, took to flight, rushed on to their raft, and strove to regain the opposite bank. But Rutald had anticipated them. Accompanied by his followers, he there awaited them, received them with thrusts of lances and spears, according as they landed, and left them wounded or dead in the moat. How shall we paint the rage and terror of these brigands? They thought these were the darts of the exterminating angel, and fell almost without resistance, so that none escaped death.

The nuns had meanwhile noticed that the blows of the battering-ram had ceased. They listened attentively, and this sudden silence redoubled the terror which the horrors of the night and the darkness of the church had awakened in them; they tremblingly watched the faint glimmer of the torches, which lengthened the dark shadows of the pillars on the pavement of the aisles, and they shuddered. . . . They supposed that the blows had only ceased because the breach was made, that the brigands had entered the monastery; and waited every moment to see them rush into the church and begin the work of death. Every flicker of the lamps, causing the shadows of the pillars to move, filled these hapless women with new alarm. One saw an assassin rushing upon her; another heard a groan; this one was taken with hysterics; that one fell in a faint; all of them endured mortal agony.

When the brave Rutald saw that there were no more enemies to combat, he ran to the door of the church, readily guessing that the whole community was assembled around the altars. He knocked repeatedly, crying:

"Reverend ladies, it is I—it is Rutald, the son of the innkeeper! Cease to fear; here are great numbers of us come to your aid! All your enemies are exterminated."

Theotberga arose, advanced to the door, and made Rutald repeat the happy tidings. Then, kneeling with the Sisters and pupils, they all thanked the Blessed Mother of God from the bottom of their hearts. They then assembled all the children in the chapter-hall to enjoy themselves a little, to embrace them, to bless them, and then sent them to take some rest. But what was the alarm of the Abbess when she observed that Yoland was not among the number! She asked Sister Eribert what had become of her; questioned the Sisters, the pupils. They all replied that they had seen her in the church, but that, in the general confusion, they had lost sight of her. They went to the church; it was deserted. The lay Sisters searched the dormitories, called her name in the cloisters, in the courts, but there was no answer. What had become of Yoland? Where was she hidden? No one had left the convent, that was certain; and the search continued.

CHAPTER X.

GERBERGE OF DROSENDORF.

SOME of my readers (and perhaps the greater number of them) were no doubt astonished to see our last chapters filled with conjurations, apparitions, spells, invocations, and fantastic hallucinations, which resemble fireside stories or old wives' tales. Why! who on earth nowadays believes in magicians, sorcerers, enchanters, in charms, potions, and communication with the devil? Would you, then, they ask me, bring before us the extravagant fancies of Martin del Rio,* popular legends, or nursery tales? Would you keep good country-folk from sleeping who fear the were-wolf, and little children who tremble at the story of Bluebeard? Come, my good man, carry your tales elsewhere; . . . . that sort of thing is out of date.

To this I reply that before so strongly condemning ancient beliefs, let each one place his hand on his conscience and ask himself seriously if it might not chance that he would not be at least as credulous as they were of old. Tell me, therefore, something about mesmerism, spiritualism, those mediums who bewilder us in our days. What are those tables that turn, that speak, that predict the future? What mean ye by somnambulists who see through walls; who read with their elbow; who know what is passing at twenty, thirty, or forty leagues from the place where they are; who read and write without knowing a letter of the alphabet; who, though they have not learned a word of medicine, point out all the diseases of the human body, discover their cause, give their remedies written in medical language, with the technical Greco-Arabic terms of that science? What mean these evocations of spirits, answers made by people dead and buried, predictions touching future events? Who, then, evokes these shades? Who makes them speak? Who reveals the future to them? Who forces them to blaspheme as they do against God, the saints of heaven, and the sacraments of the Church?

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* A very learned Jesuit who wrote a work on magic towards the end of the XVIth century. It was entitled "Disquisitiones Magicæ."

Come, ye strong minds, wherefore this embarrassment and affected silence? Ah! ye tell me at length they are mysteries of nature, mysterious laws; the gift of light, of a hidden sense in the human frame; the action of the magnetic fluid; nervous subtilty; sensibility of optics and acoustics; the secret effects of electricity or magnetism in the brain, in the blood, the nerves, in all the vital parts; unusual powers and forces of the will and imagination.

Ah! these are senseless words, swelling, ambiguous phrases, enigmas, which you do not yourselves understand. This is all the difference which exists between our way of seeing things and that of our fathers; that is, that in denying one mystery we admit a hundred others more obscure, whilst they called things by their names, and said the devil is the devil. We would absolutely attribute to nature forces which she has not and cannot have; while our ancients, wiser and more sincere than we, simply said that there were supernatural things, and frankly had recourse to diabolical agency.

It must be, however, understood that, less versed than we are in the knowledge of physical phenomena, our ancestors sometimes took for marvels events which were not out of the natural order. But, on the contrary, do not we moderns take for the mysterious effects of the secret laws of nature the artifices of our magnetizers and their truly diabolical operations? The men of ancient times who called themselves Christians knew very well that there existed certain signs, certain spells, in a word, compacts, by means of which the devil was obliged to appear, to answer, and to deceive the imagination, exciting it in various ways, and doing, above all, the greatest injury to the hapless persons who had recourse to them. Let us frankly acknowledge that we too, in our own days, and in greater numbers than of old, have our necromancers, enchanters, and magicians; with this difference, however, that our poor ancestors regarded this magic with awe; that they never had recourse to it except in the utmost secrecy, in the midst of darkness, in the deep caves, under the shade of gloomy forests. Let us add that they frequently repented of it, confessed, and did penance for it; whilst in our days these things are practised in our gilded drawing-rooms, before the eyes of all, in presence of young girls, children, mothers of families, without any scruples, and while gravely deploring the superstitions of the Middle Ages.

Be assured, dear reader, that men in all times have voluntarily had recourse to the devil; and the tempter, that they may receive him and lend him a ready ear, transforms himself in a thousand ways. In the ages of idolatry he lived in close communion with the oracles, Pythonesses, showing himself under the form of doves, ravens, fowl, or serpents, chanting prophetic verses. In the Middle Ages, in order to awe the rude tribes, he made himself terrible, and appeared only under frightful forms; or if he made himself small in order to appear amongst the hair, conceal himself in flasks, or in beverages which magicians gave to the simple people, it was always to keep over them the empire of terror. In our days, on the contrary, he conforms himself to the taste of the age; he goes into society, frequents fashionable assemblies, now sleeping with the somnambulists, dancing or writing with tables. Is he not amiable, answer me? He alarms no one. He adapts himself to Americans, Englishmen, Parisians, and Germans; he wears a beard and moustache, and converses so charmingly that it would really be a sin to say it was wrong. You can imagine how fascinating he is when a certain lady, who still prides herself on her piety, does not at all hesitate to converse with him familiarly; and if you say to the imprudent woman, "Take care; there are certain things which are not, cannot be natural; good Christians do not concern themselves about such matters," she would laugh in your face, and answer with a slightly piquant air, "Bah! bah! it is entirely natural; I am a Christian also, but I am not narrow-minded." Meanwhile, if the opportunity should occur, she would have her young daughter of twenty years of age magnetized, that she might read in the magnetic light the far-off secrets of the future. Judge, then, if that handsome devil in the black coat must not laugh under his moustache at that good Christian!

But it is time to return to Pandolph, flying with his wife from the persecution of Ottocar. Furnished with letters of introduction from the Abbot Daufer, he secretly set out in the darkness of night for Znaim, in Bohemia. Their apparent destination was a pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Boleslas, where Yoland was to rejoin them as soon as circumstances would permit. The horses, urged to their greatest speed, went at full gallop. The two fugitives were protected in the most dangerous passages by the soldiers of the Abbot Daufer, some of whom went on before, dividing themselves in such a manner as to cover the flight of Pandolph and his spouse. A large detachment formed the rear-guard, charged to escort them to the river, where they found some difficulty in crossing; but once on the other side of it, Pandolph might consider that he was comparatively free from all danger. There their escort was to leave them, leaving them under the protection of God and to their good fortune.

They gained the river at the very dawn of day, and crossed it, watched by their guides, without any accident. They found on the opposite bank fresh steeds prepared for a long journey; this was another precaution of the worthy Abbot's. The satchels which they brought with them were filled with clothes, and two wallets, slung at either side, contained flagons of wine and provisions for three days. They remounted their saddles, leaving the tired horses to the two lackeys who had held the others; they rode off, sad and silent, spurring their horses that they might free themselves as soon as possible from the snares of Ottocar. Pandolph had too much judgment not to presume that the Marquis would fly into a terrible rage on learning of his flight from the numerous spies whom he kept at Znaim, and who did not lose sight of him for a single instant.

After having climbed the smooth and easy slope of a hill covered with dwarfed oaks and ashes, they found an opening towards the hour of tierce—a broad, level land overgrown with trees, where the rays of the sun scarcely penetrated the thick foliage. A path lay straight before them which lost itself in the distance, branching off into two parts. As the travellers advanced into the thicket, they perceived stags and does, frightened by the noise of the horses, leaping in among the foliage. Flocks of partridges arose before them, flapping their wings and flying into the shade of the foliage, where they found shelter. These incidents somewhat cheered Pandolph and his wife—it seemed as if they had companions on their journey in that vast and gloomy solitude. They were then in the thickest of the wood. Suddenly Adeltrude stopped, and said to Pandolph :

"Hearken, my dear! Hearest thou not in the distance the sound of an instrument? That is not the song of a bird."

"What other music could there be in this deserted forest, which, as far as I can judge, is remote from any habitation?"

However, Pandolph stopped his steed and listened.

"By my faith," said he, "thou art right; I hear the sound of an instrument. Well, it may be a shepherd watching his sheep, and playing on the reed to pass the time."

And so saying, he went on. But as they advanced, the strains became louder and more distinct. They soon perceived a clear stream which ran by the road, and following its course they came to a large clearing, as level as a garden, in the midst of which the stream formed a little lake, whose crystalline wave reflected as in a mirror the soft grass and flowers of a thousand hues which carpeted the bank. This spot resembled somewhat in its formation the circuses of antiquity. Immense rocks formed a sort of amphitheatre which enclosed and surrounded it, and from their steep clefts arose tall larches and pines, which, waving gently in the breeze, cast their undulating shade over the western part of the rock. It was truly a fairy scene.

The two pilgrims perceived in the shade, by the margin of the little lake, a joyous group of men and women, who had just ceased dancing; some were seated on the grass, the others surrounded one who was playing on the violin, praying him to let them hear another of those beautiful symphonies. The musician, after allowing himself to be coaxed a little by the nice young ladies, at length resumed his instrument, and, assuring himself by a sweep of his bow that the chords were in proper tune, he first gave forth a prelude, then put himself in position, his head leaning lightly against the instrument, and began a grand piece. Guiding it with a delicate hand, the bow swept the strings and drew from them clearer and sweeter sounds than the first song of the lark or the linnet; his execution was full of trills, cadences, and grace-notes, and full of ineffable sweetness of expression. The lower, middle, and higher notes succeeded each other like a shower of sparks, bounding from octave to octave in a delicious song, which at times died away in a far-off murmur, or losing itself, faint and dreamy, like the morning mists in the azure of heaven. Then, suddenly, vigorous strokes would enliven the melody, now lingering on a sudden pause, again flying off in a rapid movement, full of quick, bold cadences, falling like cascades, passing from shrill treble notes to the deepest bass, and producing the most ravishing melody.

During this delightful concert Pandolph had remained as if spellbound, enchanted. He had unconsciously allowed the reins to fall from his hands, as he gazed, with parted lips, breathless and motionless, on this wonderful scene. The plaudits which greeted the performer when he had finished recalled Pandolph to reality. Beside him a pretty young girl was busy plucking flowers to weave a garland destined for the musician. He approached her, and asked in the Sclavic language what was the occasion of this joyous festival.

"What!" asked she, "art thou such a stranger in the country that thou art unaware that all faithful Christians are celebrating with great rejoicing the victory won by the lawful Pope Gregory over the Anti-Pope? Thou art, natheless, one of those schismatics who sustain the cause of Antichrist?"

"God forbid!" answered Pandolph. "I rejoice with my whole heart that the holy Pontiff has reascended the throne of Peter, where he receives, as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the homage of the whole world, which so justly belongs to him. Yea, must all loyal people detest that insolent enemy of God, who would disturb and devastate the Church, lawfully confided to Gregory, her head and master. . . . Ah! could I but have served him in arms, fain would I have shed for him the last drop of my blood! . . ."

"If so thou feelest," replied the damsel, "wherefore share ye not in our rejoicings? Dismount with thy wife, and dance a measure with us; the musician will play us one of his merriest tunes."

Pandolph, yielding to such a cordial invitation, was making ready to dismount, when suddenly the hurried gallop of a horse was heard resounding in the forest. He crossed the clearing with great speed, crying:

"Fly, Pandolph, fly without delay! Yonder come the minions of Ottocar. . . . They are upon thy path, and thou art retarded by diabolical illusions. . . . Sign thyself with the cross, and fly with tightened rein."

At these words Pandolph was as if rooted to the spot; he crossed himself, and had scarcely done so when dancers and musician suddenly disappeared. The field was again deserted, and the husband and wife, giving spurs to their steeds, hastened on by the path which led into the forest. Their unknown preserver accompanied them.

Being informed of the departure of Pandolph, Ottocar, while still seeking to obtain possession of Yoland by fraud and violence, did not fail to send secretly and in various directions troops of hirelings to overtake the fugitives. He charged the magicians to work enchantments which might delay their journey, that his emissaries might have time to reach them. But he who had already saved Pandolph from the ambuscades warned him this time again, by a trusty messenger, of the new danger which threatened him.

They journeyed, without stopping, throughout the whole extent of the forest. Having reached an open plain, their mysterious companion showed them a house standing somewhat apart, and said:

"Ye can take a little repose yonder, and then go on thy way in safety; for we have crossed the frontiers of Moravia and gained the territory of

Bohemia. The soldiers of the Marquis dare not pursue ye hither. In all cases, be ye prudent and circumspect; ye cannot be too vigilant when perfidy is without bounds."

"Good knight," asked Pandolph, "inform me at least to whom I owe liberty and life? Whom may I thank? Tell me, that I may not seem ungrateful for such great benefits."

"Pandolph," replied the messenger, "thou hast a secret but powerful protector, who unceasingly watches over Yoland and over thee. He watches every action and even every movement of Ottocar, to anticipate his plots and defeat his snares. That voice which cried to thee in the forest to retrace thy steps, which then directed thy course to the Monastery of Brunn, is not yet silent. He who thus made himself heard loves thee with a great and noble affection, because he sees in thee a defender of the truth, a confessor of Jesus Christ suffering for justice. God will, perhaps, make use of thy arm and thy counsel to defend the holy Pope Gregory and to assure the triumph of his Church. This protector is an intimate friend of the Abbot Daufer and of the Abbess Theotberga. God has natheless revealed to him in prayer that the magicians of Ottocar would seek to delay thy flight by their enchantments, and therefore did he send me to thee. Farewell! may heaven protect thee! I must now return to him who will never cease to watch over thee."

Pandolph's courage was reanimated by these words; he earnestly prayed the horseman to return, in his name, a thousand thanks to his generous protector, and to assure him that the life which he felt that he owed to him should be exposed a thousand times, if need be, in defence of the cause of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. He then directed their steps to the house, which was at no great distance, stopped there, and, together with Adeltrude, took some food. Fatigued with the long and rapid journey, he begged his wife to pass the night there.

At dawn, they resumed their way, full of concern for the dangers which threatened their dear Yoland; they feared that her violent persecutor would succeed in obtaining possession of her. Sad and distressed, but full of confidence in him who is the protector of innocence, they prayed fervently, asking the angel charged with the care of their daughter to be her counsellor in the terrible anguish which she was enduring, to cover her with his shield, and defend her with his fiery sword. Pandolph recalled the mysterious words of the holy hermit, who had predicted so many marvels with regard to Yoland, and he repeated them to the sorrowful Adeltrude as they journeyed along, exhorting her to hope in God.

"Thou art right, dear husband," answered she; "but dost remember that the hermit further declared that Yoland would have to undergo many sorrows, that she would be the victim of sufferings more numerous than the sparks which flew from the fire? Now, are we certain that the poor child can resist so many temptations? or do we know that, even at this moment, when we are flying from the fury of Ottocar, the cruel tyrant has not already cast her into the dungeons of his castle, to die there, abandoned, in darkness, and loaded with irons—a prey to privations, to terror, and to torments?"

"I pray thee banish these fearful thoughts; the angel of God is with her, and God never trieth human nature beyond its strength. Thou shouldst remember that the hermit, speaking of the trials which Yoland would have to endure, also added: 'Let her not lose courage, for God will bring her safe and sound through all these dangers.' Adeltrude, he who confides in the Lord shall never find his hopes fail. When we are kneeling before the altar of the Madonna at Boleslau, we shall offer so many prayers, mortifications, and fasts that Mary cannot fail to restore her to us speedily, safe and sound."

"Thou art right," cried Adeltrude. "Yea, I shall make a vow to fast every Saturday, on bread and water, in honor of Mary; I shall hang round her statue the costly collar which thou gavest me on my wedding-day, and which I took care to bring, hidden in the tresses of my hair. Until the day when Yoland shall be restored to me, I shall not lay aside my pilgrim's dress, and I shall cover myself with sackcloth ere I prostrate myself before her holy altar."

"I approve of all this," said Pandolph; "but as we know not what trials may yet await us, I advise thee to make only a conditional vow. Promise to wear thy pilgrim's dress as long as thou shalt remain in a place of shelter; but if thou shouldst have to leave it, thou shouldst take the brown dress worn by the widows of the country, even though thou shouldst not have recovered thy dear Yoland."

They had now reached a solitary and secluded valley, skirted by steep rocks and deep precipices. Above these ravines hovered, seeking their prey, vultures and eagles, whose piercing cries were repeated by the neighboring echoes. The sun, already sinking to the horizon, still gilded the highest crests, and shed its ruddy rays over the valley, but soon twilight succeeded to this lingering brightness. The two travellers were painfully traversing a ravine, beside a roaring torrent whose waters gushed from between the rocks. Adeltrude was following her husband up the farther bank, when a piercing cry, issuing as it seemed from a cavern, struck upon their ears. Pandolph stopped and heard these words:

"Alas! have pity upon me. Stain not thy hands with my blood: God will reward thy clemency."

Pandolph dismounted, threw the bridle to his wife, and ran across the rocks in the direction of the voice. While running, he drew his sword. He soon came upon a bandit, whose arm was already raised to strike to the heart a young woman who was extending towards him her supplicating hands. With a blow of his dreaded sword, Pandolph disarmed the murderer.

"Assassin!" cried he.

The dagger slipped from the ruffian's hands, and before he could make a movement Pandolph seized him by the hair, and threw him to the ground. He placed his knee on the breast of the assassin, and placing the point of his sword at his throat:

"Make but the slightest movement," said he, "and thou art a dead man." Then he turned to the lady, who was still kneeling:

"Madame," said he, "arise, and fear not. God has heard thy cry of distress. My wife is yonder, behind that rock; go to her, taking with thee the dagger which was to have slain thee."

The young woman obeyed, and went to Adeltrude.

"Who art thou, ruffian," asked Pandolph, "and wherefore wouldst thou take away the life of that unfortunate lady?"

"I was commanded to do so by my master, but I know not wherefore he would slay her. I am in the pay of the Lord of Drosendorf, and this lady is his wife. He conducted her himself, this morning, to the frontiers of Bohemia, then he ordered me to come hither secretly, to lead her into this solitary place, to kill her, and throw her into the abyss to be devoured by the birds of prey."

Pandolph turned his back on the wretch, remounted his horse, and took on his crupper the young stranger, still trembling and as pale as death. He counselled her to take heart, and to thank God for having miraculously saved her. When he saw her more tranquil, and that the color was returning to her face, he begged Adeltrude to converse with her. She endeavored to calm her fears, and promised her the affection of a friend and sister. She induced the young lady to decide on accompanying them to Boleslau, where she might thank the Blessed Virgin for her deliverance, and make her devotions with them, and after that they would busy themselves in securing a suitable shelter for her. This consolation and the offers of service succeeded in reassuring the poor young woman. Then Pandolph, thinking it was time to learn her name, condition, and misfortunes, now spoke, asking kindly the cause of the cruel treatment of which she had been the victim. To these questions, the stranger replied thus:

"Sir knight, I am Gerberge, a daughter of Godeswald, Count of Naumburg, in Saxony, a brave and humane prince, esteemed in all the country as one of the wisest members of the National Diet. Thou knowest how the Emperor Henry carried the war into Saxony, despite the treaties which he had sworn with our princes, bishops, and barons, allying himself, to our misfortune, with Ivan III. of Denmark. By a base stratagem he first deprived Herman of his strong Castle of Luneburg, then he took possession of all the fortresses, and placed therein garrisons of Suabian soldiers, who only issued from their dens to devastate the fields, burn houses, steal flocks, oppress the people with exactions, pillage the churches, overwhelm the peasants with labor and ill usage. If some unfortunate dared to complain of this ill usage, he was immediately accused of the crime of high-treason, and consequently punished by the most cruel torments. The wooden horse, pincers, and ropes were then continually in use. If the culprit were rich, they first stripped him of all his goods; if he were poor, he was subjected to the hardest and most humiliating slavery. The great ones of the kingdom were also ill used by the tyrant, who was not ashamed to reduce to slavery the noble Count Frederic, and to arrogate to himself the right of setting free the illustrious Count Wilhelm Ladislaw. One day, all the magnates of the kingdom were convoked at the diet of Goslar, on the festival of St. Peter. Dukes, counts, archbishops, bishops, and abbots were assembled on the appointed day, in the imperial palace. The tyrant sent them word, in derision, that he was playing checkers and that they must wait. He kept them thus till evening, and then an officer of the palace entered the hall, and said, 'You can retire and attend to your business; our master is now some miles from Goslar.' I leave thee to judge of the anger and resentment of the princes and great lords at so cruel an affront. The Margrave Dedi with great difficulty succeeded in appeasing the Saxons, who would have broken their oath and made war on the insolent monarch.

"The tyrant was not so blind that he did not fully understand that he had thus thrown down the gauntlet to our magnates, but as he was extremely artful and crafty, he feigned to take the interests of the Saxons greatly to heart and to be anxious for the continuation of his friendly relations with that country. He loudly paraded his sentiments of friendship, and numerous courtiers feigned to believe them. He hastily raised a large and warlike army, and proclaimed throughout Germany that he designed to punish the Poles for having invaded with fire and blood the Bohemian provinces. The Saxons, on their part, were not behindhand with him. An edict was secretly published throughout the kingdom, convoking the nobles and heads of numerous families of the people to a national assembly, at Nockmenslau. Otho of Bavaria, in a chivalrous discourse, painted a striking picture of the perfidy and cruelty of Henry against a kingdom so loyal. It convinced all those who were present of the urgent necessity of preventing the misfortunes which this new war would bring upon them, and the occupation of the country by foreign troops. He added that Henry's design was not to chastise the Poles but to consummate the ultimate destruction of the Saxons. Henry was surprised at Goslar by sixty thousand Saxons, under the command of Otho of Nordheim, and fell back in affright on the impregnable fortress of Harzburg, which was soon surrounded on every side. The tyrant could not fly, for the Saxons closely hemmed him in on every side. During this time they took and destroyed Heimburg, with the greater part of the fortresses and castles which, overlooking the plain from the height of the steep mountains, had held the whole country in the most shameful bondage.

"Meanwhile, the provisions were diminishing in the fortress. Henry felt that he would soon fall into the hands of his enemies, and one night, accompanied by Berthold of Carinthia, he let himself down from the height of the rocks and concealed himself in the neighboring forests. He walked without ceasing for four entire days, and at length arrived, weary, wayworn, and dejected, at the village of Eschenweg, whence he reached the fortress of Hersfeld. Finding himself in a friendly country, he had nothing better to do than to collect an army, which he pretended to raise against the Poles. After a series of interminable ruses, parleys and treaties, promises, excuses and flattery, at length finding the occasion propitious, he suddenly pounced upon Saxony, occupied it at every point, and established therein his terrible dominion, which made all Germany tremble and horrified the whole Christian world.

"In the midst of all this treason, destruction, assaults, and butchery, Ariald, Lord of Drosendorf, suddenly laid siege to the town of Naumburg, situated far from the theatre of war, and which he thought, for that very reason, incapable of resistance. My father and my brother Walram offered him an unexpected resistance. My father's soldiers and all the citizens hastened to the walls, towers, and battlements, riddled the assailants with darts, throwing down upon them everything that came to their hands. The women took up the pavement of the streets, and carried in their dresses, on their heads, or on their backs, stones, sand, or bricks, which they threw upon the heads of their assailants, who fell in crowds into the moat. I myself assisted with other women in the defence of the fort, whence I carried to the ramparts great vessels of boiling water and stones. I perceived my brother firing on the enemy; he had already killed several of them, and I was handing him arrows. Unhappily, the string of his bow snapped. I immediately cut off a lock of my long hair, twisted it, and we fastened the new species of string at either end of the bow. Walram placed upon it the quiver of arrows, and was using it wonderfully, when all at once an arrow struck him in the middle of the forehead. He fell at my feet, clasping my hand, and saying 'Jesus!' he expired in my arms. The Lord of Drosendorf observing that one of our chiefs had fallen, redoubled his efforts, and concentrated the whole strength of the attack on the spot whither the citizens had hastened on seeing my brother fall. One of the spectators had drawn the fatal arrow from the wound, and several of them raised him, and, weeping, carried him to the palace. The confusion which reigned for the moment on the ramparts permitted some of the assailants to make an entrance: their chief himself was one of the first to leap on the battlements and to plant his banner on the walls. A multitude of the enemy followed him, spreading disorder on their way. At that moment, Ariald suddenly sprang from behind upon my father, who was valiantly defending the walls, and, by an act of cruel and cowardly treachery, struck him with his axe and split his skull.

"After this ignoble deed, the Lord of Drosendorf passed through the city, putting to the sword all who came in his way. I ran trembling to the palace, to take away and save a young brother, whom I tenderly loved. Alas! just as I was entering a subterranean passage which led without the city walls, I was surprised by two soldiers who were pillaging our home. They dragged me with the child into the great hall, where the cruel conqueror was already to be found. He snatched poor little Vegelin from my arms, seized him by the hair, spit in his face, and slew him before my eyes. Then, carrying him to the terrace near by, he threw him furiously to two bears whom my father kept chained at the garden gates. Wouldst thou credit it? those animals, to whom the poor child was wont to bring some bread every day, recognized him, all bloody. They howled frightfully, and in place of devouring him began, moaning, to lick his wounds, from which the blood was still flowing.

"At this spectacle I fell unconscious, and the Lord of Drosendorf had me carried to my apartments. The following day, early in the morning, he came to visit me, and coveting the sum which would be my inheritance, as I was the only remaining child of Godeswald, he forced me to give him my hand, in spite of my protestations, in that same palace which he had stained with my brother's blood. Ariald hastened to regulate the government of Naumburg, and, taking possession of my father's treasures, he brought me to his castle, having taken the title of Lord of Drosendorf and Naumburg. He had been a widower for a year, and there remained from his first alliance only a young girl of fifteen, named Luisgarde, a dear, gentle child, brought up by her mother in the greatest piety. Luisgarde was my only consolation in my fearful anguish. I found in her a sister, a friend, rather than a daughter, and I often poured out to her my heart, lacerated with sorrow. Her mother, a princess remarkable for her elevated mind and great virtue, had inspired in her daughter a deep and tender veneration for the holy Pope Gregory, the lawful successor of the Prince of the Apostles. It needed nothing more to obtain for her the hatred of her husband, who was a sworn protector of the Anti-Pope. Being unable to bend her to his perverse designs, he overwhelmed her with all sorts of abuse, and her death soon necessarily followed such cruel treatment. Luisgarde never left me ; and when her father went to the chase, as often happened, we would go and pray together in the chapel for the exaltation of the holy Church, the triumph of Pope Gregory, and the humiliation of his enemies. One day when we thought ourselves alone, Ariald surprised us just as we were reciting the prayer for the Pope, replacing the name of the Anti-Pope with that of Gregory. It required nothing more to throw him into a violent rage, and it was a mere chance that he did not draw his dagger and slay me. He roughly seized the trembling Luisgarde by the arm, and commanded her, if she valued her life, never to set foot within my apartments. He confined her in a solitary room in the tower, where he sent to her often, in order to corrupt her faith, one of those schismatic priests of whom there are, unhappily, too many in Germany. Thou canst imagine my sorrow at seeing myself separated from that angel who was my only comfort on earth. We only saw each other at dinner, when her father seated her on his left hand and me on his right. The repast ended, he would send her back immediately to her room.

"In the interval, the Count of Grubenhagen demanded of Ariald the hand of his daughter. This lord was young, brave, and enjoyed great favor at court. But, an implacable enemy of the party favorable to Pope Gregory, he considered him as a usurper of the goods of the Church, the vendor of benefices, the persecutor of the monks favorable to their lawful pastor. Ariald received this demand with evident joy, not only because of the Count's fortune and position, but because of the favor which he enjoyed with the Emperor Henry. He sent for Luisgarde, announced to her in my presence the Count's proposal, and expatiated on the honor this alliance would be to the family. The young girl, much disturbed, looked at me, as if to draw courage from my eyes, and answered her father timidly :

"'This proposal seems most premature to me ; I am so young and inexperienced as yet, and my education is not finished.' The father replied : 'Poor excuses ! My will is that thou accept the hand of the Count. This alliance is advantageous ; thou couldst not even have hoped for such ; and the Count will not submit to any trifling. His envoys will depart to-morrow for Grubenhagen.' The poor girl, in despair, threw herself into my arms, crying: 'Mother, obtain from my father that I may remain with him.'

"Ariald, the proud and obdurate-hearted, could not control his rage; he seized his daughter by the hair and dragged her out of my arms, saying to her, in a tone of authority, 'Thou shalt obey!'

"The struggle lasted two days. The father employed every means to bend Luisgarde to his will. She remained firm. Herman II., Bishop of Bamberg, accidentally came to visit us. He was a sworn enemy of Pope Gregory. Ariald led him to his daughter, so that the prelate might use his authority to render her docile. It was in vain; all the resources of his eloquence remained ineffectual. The young girl briefly replied: 'Let the Count of Grubenhagen return to his allegiance to the holy Pope Gregory, let him combat the schism which is ravaging the Church of Jesus Christ, and I shall think myself happy and honored in receiving him for my husband; otherwise, he can never count on my affection.' On hearing these words, Ariald gave a roar which was heard throughout the castle, and addressing the Bishop, who was astonished to find such courage in a child, he exclaimed: 'This rebellion is encouraged by her step-mother!' Immediately he sent for two archers, and commanded them to convey the dear child into the darkest and dampest dungeon of the castle. Next day he had two horses saddled, and, without a word, brought me to an estate which he possesses on the frontiers of Bohemia. We alighted, and before crossing the threshold of the manor, he regarded me with furious eyes, and ordered me to follow one of his men-at-arms, whom he had secretly commanded to slay me in the valley. O my dear preserver! if I am yet alive, it is thanks to thy generous protection. . . . But, alas! what will become of my dear Luisgarde? Who will protect her? Who will console her in her grief? Who will give her strength to resist so rude an assault?"

"Mary," replied Pandolph. "Thou wilt place on her altar the dagger which was about to pierce thy heart; we shall pray with thee for thy daughter. Know that we too mourn our only and much loved child, who is no less exposed than thy beloved Luisgarde."

CHAPTER XI.

THE HERMIT'S CAVE.

YOLAND, impelled by the hand of iron which had suddenly seized her while she was beseeching the Blessed Virgin to save her, saw the secret door in the panel close upon her, and found herself in total darkness. By a movement quite natural under such circumstances, she stretched out her arms, gave a feeble cry, stifled by the narrow walls which surrounded her, and made an effort to escape. But the hand which held her would not loosen its hold, and drew her along through the darkness without giving her time to breathe.

She soon lost consciousness of all that went on around her. The hurried pace of the unknown, the bewilderment, pain, and anxiety which filled her breast, the cold and icy air through which they were hastening, the darkness which enveloped her, deprived her of the use of her senses. Her wandering mind left her without power of reflection, and a thousand phantoms, vanishing immediately, crowded upon her imagination. Was this another of those diabolical illusions, one of the enchantments which had lately so much alarmed her? Was she not still in the church, among the Sisters, while a frightful vision made her believe herself journeying through the night? She could not discern a single object, nor hear even a murmur. Suddenly a thought struck her; she seized the little Madonna which she always carried about her, clasped it to her heart, and crossed herself with it. This sign, which always dispelled these fantastic visions and terrible apparitions, produced no effect. The darkness did not disappear, and the hand which drew her along did not release her. She heard the sound of his steps on the earth and the noise of his garments against the walls of the subterranean passages.

"Ah! my God!" said she, "I have fallen into the hands of Ottocar. He will throw me into the horrible dungeons of the Castle of Brunn, to die of hunger or be tortured by pincers, iron instruments, or given to the flames!"

She shuddered with horror. The hand which still guided her along could feel the poor girl tremble in his grasp; but the mysterious being still hurried on, like a man acting under the irresistible power of a superior force. Sometimes Yoland felt an icy liquid drop upon her face, and this increased her terror. They were drops of water oozing through the roof and falling upon her brow or cheek. Sometimes she came against objects suspended in the air, and large cobwebs floated against her face.

Just then the passage formed a turn; a faint glimmer shone upon the walls. She raised her eyes and perceived a light towards which they seemed to be approaching. A low groan escaped her breast. She would have stopped, but the implacable hand still urged her onwards. Guided by this light, which was at some distance before them, the unknown went on for about the space of a quarter of an hour, and during this time Yoland endeavored to see the face of him who was carrying her. It was not Ottocar, but the stranger's face did not seem altogether unknown to her, though her trouble and confusion of mind prevented her from recognizing him.

At length they came to the light. The stranger hastened his steps, and she soon found herself in an almost circular cavern, which had something of the form of a temple. Having reached the centre of the cave, he released the young girl's arm and disappeared by a dark passage with him who had lighted their way. In the middle of the cave burned a large fire, the clear blaze of which lit up every corner of the place. Beside the fire a venerable old man was seated in a sort of rustic armchair. Near him was a vacant seat. Seeing that Yoland was frightened and trembling in every limb, he said to her in a gentle voice : " Sit down, my daughter, and fear nothing ; thou art safe here. Divine Providence has led thee hither to snatch thee from the clutches of thy persecutor. I see thee trembling and shivering. . . . Take courage. . . . I repeat, dear Yoland, thou art safe, and the minions of Ottocar will not venture to seek thee here to conduct thee to the Castle of Brunn. Thou holdest in thy hands the image of the Blessed Virgin, and art clasping it to thy heart; therefore, my child, thanks to her protection, thou hast nothing to fear, for she is the most tender of mothers, the consolation of the afflicted, the defence of the oppressed, and the crown of those who triumph in fighting the battles of the Lord."

Somewhat reassured by these kind and paternal words, Yoland raised her eyes to the old man. His open look, his venerable countenance, his long, white hair, his flowing beard, which reached far down his breast, gave him a truly heavenly aspect. He wore a black robe, fastened at the waist by a leather belt, and he held in his hand a stick on which he was leaning.

"How thou resemblest thy father!" cried the old man. "The Abbot Daufer told me so, and Theotberga confirmed his words; but I am now convinced of the resemblance by my own eyes, and I rejoice in it. Since thou hast his features, thou shouldst also have his lofty soul, his pious and noble heart. Dear Yoland, it is now many years since I once received, in this very grotto, the Count Pandolph, who took shelter here from the storm. I then predicted to him thy destiny, and what God, in his inscrutable designs, reserved for thy youth. . . . Alas! thy sorrow and thy peril are not yet over; thou shalt have much more to suffer. But God, who has hitherto preserved thee, wilt protect thee in the future. . . . Dear child, ever retain that sacred image; leave it not for an instant. . . . Thou hast prized it since thy childhood, and thou art perhaps unaware that it belonged to me. . . I sent it by my friend Daufer to Count Pandolph. . . . It was blessed by Pope Alexander II. . . . Keep it sacredly; it will be of great help to thee. Also, do thou cease not to wear Anselm's ring; the cross engraved on its seal will preserve thee from all evil. The sanctity of Anselm, who has such power over the devils, will keep them away from thee."

At these words, Yoland spoke with modest firmness:

"Father," said she, "who art thou? I know that I have found in thee a new protector, to whom I owe my escape from a great danger; but how didst thou learn of the assault on the convent; how couldst thou take me away from the soldiers of Ottocar?"

"Thou shalt know at the proper time who I am. It would take too long to explain to thee how I was informed of what was taking place at the convent. . . . Besides, thou art weary and hast need of repose. . . . As to the manner in which—thanks be to God—I removed thee from the fury of thine assailants, thou knowest it. . . . We are at about half a league from the convent, and no one is aware of the existence of this long-forgotten place of refuge. It was used as an asylum for the virgins of the Lord and the treasures of the Church in the time of the Hungarians, who for half a century devastated the country by their incursions. The Abbess Theotberga alone knows of this cave, but she did not think of it in the confusion of to-night, and will be very uneasy on thy behalf. Therefore, I shall let her know speedily that thou art in safety. But thou hast not yet slept to-night, and thou hast undergone much terror, without speaking of thy journey to the cave. . . . Come with me, dear child ; come and take some rest. . . . The night is not far spent as yet."

At these words the old man took a lamp, and, going before, led her through a long passage which ended in a sort of little room, furnished with a straw-couch covered with sheepskin. He told Yoland to lie down, and retired, leaving the lamp resting on a jutting rock. The young girl was so much bewildered by the novelty all around her, and at the same time so wearied by the agitation and fatigue, that she soon fell into a deep sleep. It was nearly six o'clock in the morning when she awoke—astonished at finding herself in a strange place, on that poor bed, over which hung the crystallizations which the light reflected in a thousand colors. She rubbed her eyes, looked around her as though she were dreaming, and sought to remember all that had passed. How had she come here ? She found on her breast the little statue of Mary, kissed it tenderly, pressed it to her heart, and perceiving a cross planted in a cleft in the rock, she arose and hastened to throw herself before it. She prayed to God, with clasped hands, to protect with the power of his divine blood, which was poured out on that holy cross, a poor orphan deprived of all human help.

As she was finishing her prayers, the old man entered softly. Seeing Yoland's fervor and her devout attitude, he stopped, and a tear of emotion moistened his eyes. At length he approached, and called her in a low voice, holding out the little basket which he had brought.

"My child," said he, "a little food will restore thy strength." And laying the basket on the ground, he continued:

"Hast thou rested well? Hast thou somewhat recovered from the agitation of the night? Here is some warm milk. . . ."

He drew from the basket an earthen jar and some slices of black bread covered with honey.

"Here," said he, "that will do thee good. I regret that I have only such coarse food to offer thee, but for thirty years no meat has come into this cave, and I have only taken milk since I was seventy years of age; before that, I fed on fruits and herbs."

Yoland was pale, and felt in her veins the shivering which precedes fever. She took a slice of bread, but she found it bitter, and could not swallow a single mouthful. Meanwhile, the good old man, seating himself on a stool before her, said:

"Eat to restore thy strength . . . thou art exhausted. Come, make an effort, my child."

And to divert her he went on:

"At this very time, dear Yoland, Count Pandolph, thy father, with thy good and worthy mother, are on their way to Boleslau, whither I will send thee to join them. . . . God granted me the grace to save thy father twice. One night, he was riding, well armed, in the direction of Brunn; he wished to remove thee secretly from the snares of Ottocar. But the latter, guessing his design, had placed soldiers on the way, who were to seize upon Pandolph. I learned his evil purpose, and, when night came, I glided among the rocks which skirted the way, and, raising my voice, said: 'Fly, Pandolph, fly, or thou art a dead man.' He turned his horse, and went in search of the Abbot Daufer, to whom I had made him known. That prelate gave him an escort to cover his retreat. Another time, he was going to Bohemia. I learned through my spies that Ottocar had his hirelings in pursuit of him, and that he sought to delay his journey by enchantments. I sent a messenger to thy father, and he arrived just in time to warn and save him from this new danger. O my child! imagine the fury of the Marquis of Brunn, when he learns that thou art no longer at the convent. I am sure that all the roads are already occupied with his soldiers; there will be no defile, nor path, nor ford that will not be guarded by his emissaries. We have need, in these circumstances, of much tact and patience."

While the hermit was speaking, the young girl was growing more and more feverish. The disease was rushing fiercely and rapidly through her veins, making her in turn burn like fire or grow pale and cold as wax. Much disturbed by the change which had come over her, the old man exclaimed:

"My child, what is the matter?"

Just as he spoke, the poor girl fell senseless to the earth.

"My God!" cried the solitary.

He hastened to raise her, and laid her on the bed, then he went to seek some additional covering for her. Yoland was scarcely breathing. Her eyes were fixed and vacant. The hermit bathed her temples with cold water. She did not recover consciousness, and the water immediately dried up on her burning cheeks. Alarmed by this sudden fainting fit, the poor hermit knew not what to do; and, seeing that his resources were useless, he threw himself on his knees at the foot of the bed, and begged the God of all goodness to cast a look of compassion and favor upon the innocent young girl.

"See," cried he, weeping, "see, O my sweet Saviour! the sad condition to which this dear child is reduced for the love of thee. She would preserve her virtue unsullied, and refuses to unite herself with a perjurer who only heeds his perverse desires, and tramples under foot the most sacred duties, the obedience which he owes to his father, the faith which he had pledged to the Duke of Moravia. He mocks at the laws of the Church, and laughs at the scandal which would be given to Christians by the solemn violation of his oaths! . . . . This pious child, docile to thy commandments, O my God! obeys thee in preference to contracting a brilliant alliance. Ah! deign to help her. Grant her the sweetness of thy divine grace. . . . . Restore her to health; save her pure soul, and deliver her from the evils which threaten her."

The servant of God raised his eyes to look at Yoland. She opened hers, and heaved a deep sigh.

"My child," said he, "it is I, the old hermit, who wishes thee well, who watches by thy pillow, who will never abandon thee. Take courage, Yoland! this will be only a slight weakness."

"O father!" said she, in a broken voice, "father, I feel that I am very ill; my head burns; my heart beats; all my strength has failed me. Alas! I have suffered so much lately. I made such efforts; I hid my feelings; I appeared gay with the nuns and my companions, but I was always struggling with myself. . . . I have suffered so much too; I have not strength to tell thee. My God! where are my parents? Alas! what sorrow to know that they are fugitives, are persecuted—threatened with death! . . . Father, aid me! I am fainting! . . ."

Saying these words, she became unconscious. The hermit raised her burning head to prevent the blood from rushing to her throbbing temples. He regarded her pale and contracted face with paternal solicitude, and, weeping, he said to himself:

"Ah! my God! if e'en the Abbot Daufer were here he would aid me with his counsel. Rupert, who was to bring me my provisions, has not yet come, and here am I alone with this dear child who is dying. O Blessed Virgin! come to my assistance. Grant me the grace to make it known to the Abbess Theotberga! . . . She alone can relieve me from so painful a position."

Then he called the young girl:

"Yoland! Yoland! open thine eyes; it is I; look at thy poor father; look at me, my child!"

Yoland was still unconscious; at length she opened her eyes, looked languidly at the old man, who, reassured by seeing her smile feebly, offered her some water. Just then he heard a step. He turned, asking:

"Is it thou, Rupert?"

"Yes, Father Manfred, it is I."

The hermit left the sick girl to go and meet the new-comer.

"Thou comest late to-day," said he. "But wherefore that startled air? What has occurred?"

"Father," replied Rupert, "the town of Brunn is in revolt—they are fighting in the streets and squares. . . ."

"What dost thou tell me? What is the cause of this rebellion? The state is in peace, and there are no enemies in the neighborhood."

"As far as I could learn, this is how it came to pass: Thou must know that the young Marquis Ottocar resolved to marry a damsel from the Convent of St. Mary. To attain his end he made use of a deceitful Bohemian woman and of two magicians whom he kept in his service as astrologers. But temptations and enchantments were alike impotent. The young maiden refused his offers, saying that she was but a child of the people, and that the Marquis was already betrothed to Gisela of Moravia. The day before yesterday Ottocar finally sent a detachment of troops to besiege the convent. But it seems that the landlord of the inn on the hillside, getting wind of his design, sent his son to the neighboring farms and hamlets to give the alarm and make known his sacrilegious attempt, and that all the men took arms and hastened to the defence of the virgins of the Lord. Thou knowest how all the country round venerate the sanctuary of St. Mary, which brings so many blessings on our country. This convent is dear to the whole neighborhood because of the benefits which it confers on all the poor of the country. Now, the peasants, having learned the designs of Ottocar, collected a well-armed band, and surprised the villains just as they were preparing to scale the convent walls. The night was dark and the woods in the vicinity very thick, so that the peasants had the advantage over the retainers of the Marquis. Seeing their comrades falling into the moat, the vandals would have flown, but they were surrounded on all sides and fell into the hands of the peasants, who exterminated them to the last man. There did not remain a single one to carry to Brunn the tidings of their death.

"When morning came, and the bridge was lowered and the gates opened, the peasants re-entered Brunn, weapons in hand, and, dispersing over the market-place, in the public squares, and in the shops, they roused the people to protest against the cruelty of the Count.

"'He despises all justice,' said they, 'and respects nothing, not even things the most sacred. He mocks his subjects, the greater number of whom are faithful to the true Pope, and have sworn to him, in their hearts, obedience and submission. If he would conciliate the esteem of his vassals, let him chase the astrologers, the magicians, from his court, and attach himself to the true Pope! . . .'

"They were soon seen forming in restless and threatening groups. At length, Goson, the butcher—that giant who dwells near the market—collected around him the butcher-boys, curriers, and tradesmen of all sorts, and began to cry out: 'Death! death to the sorcerers and magicians! to the gallows with the vandals, the enemies of God! . . .'

"And forthwith they advanced in a body towards the fort, striking and slaying all the soldiers of Ottocar whom they met in the streets. They reached the great tower before the guards had time to raise the bridge. The shock was terrible. Crowded into the alleys of the first court, the soldiers disputed the passage with the peasants, whose ranks were increasing every moment. Ottocar hastily armed himself, mounted his horse, and, with all that remained of his men, went out through the back gate to surprise the rebels in the rear.

"Meanwhile, the two astrologers, hearing the shouts of the crowd, and understanding that their life was in danger, slipped in among the soldiers of Ottocar, that they might fly and hide outside of the palace. But they had not passed the threshold when four of the grooms of the Marquis's stables, who hated them, seized them by the arm and forced them to conceal themselves in the haystack. One of these brave men immediately came forth, throwing himself into the thickest of the crowd. He took with him four stout yeomen, and said to them: 'The magicians are yours!' They entered the stable, and began to toss up the hay and straw, under which they found the two sorcerers. Immediately there arose a maddening noise and tumult. Their hands were tied behind their back, they were led triumphantly through the whole town, with the acclamations of the people, whose numbers increased at every step. 'Where shall we burn them?' was the cry on every side. 'On the square of Podestat!' 'No,' cried another voice, 'their stench would suffocate us; let us rather burn them on the Hungarian mound.' 'Yes, yes, bravo!' 'Pity 'tis that we have not Swatiza to make a trio,' said a little humpbacked and toothless hag. 'She is a witch, I tell ye! a stealer of children! Let us fall upon Swatiza.' Hundreds of the rebels ran to seek her. During this time some others had driven a stake on the rampart, and collected fagots and branches of trees. The dismal train advanced. The two magicians walked at the head. They were loaded with irons, spit upon, covered with mud, and dirt, and stones. 'Mercy!' cried the wretches, 'mercy'! 'Neither pity nor mercy for devils like ye,' roared the crowd; 'to the fire with the imps of Satan.' 'To the fire, to the fire!' repeated a thousand voices. 'And Swatiza?' 'Hast thou found the hag?'—'Behold her!'—'No, it is not her: she has escaped!'—'Escaped! how?' A fat miller, stout and panting, ran up crying, 'Dost not know? The witch has fled! Gondo had trapped her, but as he was about to lay hold on her she slipped through his fingers like water, and changed into an owl. She flew over the roofs, snapping her beak as if to defy us.'

"When he had been informed of the rising of the town and the departure of his son to quell the sedition, the old Marquis was alarmed. He feared that Ottocar, following the impulse of his anger, would be urged into some extreme measure. He therefore sent an officer and commanded him to send an outrider to Znaim, asking the Abbot Daufer, in his name, to repair to Brunn in order to calm the infuriated populace. The inhabitants of Brunn respected him so highly that his presence alone could appease their wrath and influence them to disperse peacefully."

"And did the messenger go?" asked the hermit.

"Yes, like lightning, but I fear he will arrive too late, for the people are furious and will make an end of the retainers. The whole country is in a turmoil. . . . Coming hither, I met armed bands hastening towards the town."

"And now," replied the old man, "thou wilt return to Brunn, find the Abbot Daufer, and tell him that I desire to see him on a matter of the greatest urgency. Thou wilt add—but this in secret—that he must bring beneath his cloak a consecrated Host. That done, thou wilt repair to the convent and ask for the Abbess. Tell her, from me, to be behind the altar of the Blessed Virgin, alone, two hours before midnight. To provide herself with a lantern. If she appear surprised and ask for some explanation, say to her, that it is at the express request of Father Manfred. It is needful that she be there without fail. . . . But I was forgetting. . . . Hast seen Raymond this morning? If thou shouldst meet him, tell him I shall expect him at noon with Anolim. . . . I desire that he take no part in the rebellion. . . . And now, farewell, and take care that no misfortune befall thee on the way."

Rupert had no sooner departed than the worthy old man returned to Yoland; he found her deeply agitated, and her face burning.

"Father," said she, as she perceived him, "I heard a portion of what that man related to thee. . . . I begin to hope that the assailants did not force their way into the convent, and that the nuns and my companions have not fared ill through these wretches. May God and the Blessed Virgin be praised for it! But I thought I heard that the town had risen! My God! what misfortunes! How many evils on my account. . . . Ah! father, my sins are the cause of all. . . ."

"Be calm," dear Yoland. "Like the martyrs, thou art suffering for justice' sake; they, no more than thou, were the cause of the tumult which sometimes broke out on their account. Human perfidy alone caused all these evils; they must not be attributed to the innocent, who, firm in their virtue, braved the anger of men. The Lord permits this violence to try the just, who will always draw therefrom their greatest good. Be tranquil, then, and strive to become restored to health. I will make thee some broth of honey and water to quench thy thirst."

The hermit went into the larger cavern, stirred up the fire, which was almost extinguished, and placed upon it a large pot of water; waiting for it to boil, he knelt on a stool and prayed for the cure of the young girl. After some moments he thought he heard, in the silence of the cavern, the sound of a step at its entrance. Listening, he soon heard as if a heavy weight had fallen on the ground, then a stifled groan. The hermit rose and instantly ran in the direction of the noise. A warrior, fully armed and with visor lowered, was stretched on the earth in a pool of blood, which was oozing from the joining of his armor.

"Ah! venerable man," said the wounded knight, "help me, and see if thou canst staunch the blood, for I am dying!"

"Sir Knight," replied Manfred, raising him a little, "lean on my shoulder. . . . My cavern is but a few paces from here."

The warrior, assisted by the hermit, was able to move slowly towards the cavern, and was seated near the fire. The solitary took a bundle of straw from a corner, and placed it behind the knight, who was leaning against a fragment of rock. He then raised his visor.

"What! thou art the Marquis Ottocar! . . ." cried he; "and thou art wounded."

He hastened to unclasp his breastplate and remove his coat of mail, to examine the wound.

"To my thinking it is not dangerous," said he; "take courage, I will go for some linen."

When Pandolph described to Theotberga the cavern of the hermit, he had said that it was composed of three compartments, one in the centre and two on either side. The old man hastened into the apartment opposite to that which Yoland occupied, and which served him for a cell. He took balm, bandages, and a basin, and returned quickly to the patient, whose wound he washed with tepid water; he then spread some balm on the linen, placed it on the wound, bandaging it all up tightly.

"Marquis Ottocar," said he, "that balm will stop the blood in less than a second, I know by experience. Thy vassals often come and pray me to staunch their wounds when they have been injured by a blow of a hatchet. There is no wound, however large or deep, that this balm will not heal in a few hours. Dost thou feel any relief?

"Yes," replied the young man; "but this great loss of blood has considerably weakened me."

"Where wert thou wounded?"

"Near the river. Roused by some enemies of the peace, my peasants—infuriated Gregorians—took arms and rushed into Brunn to raise the town. I immediately armed myself, and having surprised them in the rear with my spearsmen, I drove them into the country. But we met with armed bands on all the farms, and while pursuing them, I was stricken by a javelin and fell from my horse. I was alone and at some distance from Brunn. I remembered thy cavern, and I came thither, though constantly losing blood. Having reached the entrance, I could proceed no further. I fell, and would have died of exhaustion if thou hadst not come to my assistance.

"Let us thank the Divine mercy," replied the old man ; "for if thou hadst had the misfortune to die suddenly, what a severe judgment thou wouldst have had to undergo ! The Supreme Judge is rigorous to all, but more especially to the great ones of earth. All men are sinners, but those who govern others shall have to answer to the Eternal Judge for their inferiors, who often offend God by their command, as Jeroboam caused Israel to lie. Thy vassals have done ill in rebelling against thy authority. . . . But thou wouldst have to render an account to God for having outraged their faith. . . . Thy people believe Pope Gregory to be their lawful Pontiff ; wherefore lay snares for their faith and lead them into schism ? They patiently endured imposts, taxes, and exactions, but they would not suffer their faith to be tampered with. . . . Thou seest, Prince, the whole West is agitated. Civil wars devastate the fairest provinces of the empire. And wherefore ? Because they would constrain the people to deny their faith, and break the bonds which bind them to their lawful Pope. And, tell me, what is the cause of this tumult, this combat, this cruelty, pillage, and burning ? The people are indeed guilty ; but those who roused and provoked them to these excesses, have they a right to wash their hands, saying, We are innocent of so much bloodshed ? If it is true, as I am assured, that thy retainers attempted to besiege, last night, the Convent of St. Mary, I understand that the people have risen to avenge such a crime. . . . Weigh, then, the consequences of these deplorable acts ; the sacrilege and the distress of the spouses of Christ, the scandal of the people, death, terror, banishment, prison, and the gallows ! . . . Now, on whom will fall the judgment of God ? On him alone whose duty obliged him to prevent such evils. Prince, if I speak very freely to thee, it is because I am animated by unfailing devotion to thee. . . . But can I calmly think of the vengeance which, in thy wrath, thou wilt perhaps inflict on thy vassals, who have risen only to defend their faith and their altars ? I do not justify their excesses, but it was their zeal alone which repulsed the sacrilegious violators of holy things. Marquis, God grants thee thy life in his mercy ; wilt thou be inexorable towards the guilty ?"

At this discourse, so full of candor and just severity, the young Ottocar, whose heart still retained the germs of greatness and generosity, raised his eyes to the hermit.

"Venerable man," exclaimed he, "no one has ever used to me language so loyal and sincere as thine. . . . Princes are surrounded by flatterers who lead them astray. . . . I thank thee for thy paternal advice, and I swear to thee, by my faith, that I shall not lose sight of it in judging the chiefs of the revolt."

The moment seemed favorable to Manfred to beseech him to cease his cruel persecution of Yoland; he besides suspected that, being informed of the young girl's disappearance, Ottocar would have an active search made everywhere. He was about to approach the delicate question when Raymond entered. Perceiving the Marquis, he said:

"My lord, I have met thy retainers; they are seeking thee, and are very anxious on thy behalf."

"Are they far from here?"

"No, my lord; some are on the banks of the river; the others are scouring the fields. They have with them thy steed, and the group which are guarding it are but two hundred paces hence."

"Call them," said the Marquis.

Then, turning to the hermit, he said:

"Now that I feel better, wilt thou show me the various compartments of this cavern? They tell me there are here crystallizations which reflect a thousand colors."

The hermit, who knew Yoland was so near, was somewhat embarrassed by this demand, but he answered cheerfully:

"My lord, I am too much honored by thy visit, but at present, credit me, thou art not yet recovered from thy fatigue, and even wert thou completely restored, the dampness of these cells would do thee the greatest injury." Then, changing the subject:

"Ah!" cried he, "here they are; hearest thou the neighing of the horses? I go to bring them hither."

And he ran to the entrance of the grotto. Soon there appeared two retainers, who raised the Prince, placed him in his saddle, and, supporting him on either side, rode off. The hermit breathed freely. He told Raymond to wait, and ran anxiously to Yoland's bedside.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY UNVEILED.

THE day was declining. The hermit clearly perceived that Yoland was steadily growing worse. A burning fever threw her into a fearful delirium, accompanied by frequent fainting-fits, which gave her the appearance of a corpse. Motionless, by the poor child's pillow, the hermit from time to time wiped away the sweat which bathed her forehead. He supplicated the Holy Mother of God to assist him in that trying time. At length he heard the voice of Rupert. Manfred advanced to the entrance of the cave, where he found the Abbot Daufer just arriving. He threw himself into his arms, clasped him affectionately to his heart, and shed tears.

"What ails thee?" asked the illustrious Abbot; "what mean these tears and this sadness with thou who art wont to welcome me so joyfully? Is it the rebellion of Brunn which so much afflicts thee? God be praised! I arrived in time to suppress it; and, save two magicians who were burned at dawn and a retainer wounded in the fight, there has been nothing to regret."

"O my friend! that is not the cause of my tears.

I weep over poor Yoland, whom we are about to lose if God take not compassion on our affliction."

"Has she fallen into the hands of Ottocar? I passed beside the convent coming hither, but I was in such haste to reach thee that I did not enter. One of the workmen told me that, thanks be to God, all the nuns are safe and sound, but still much disturbed, not only on account of the alarm which they underwent, but on account of the disappearance of one of their pupils, who, it would seem, concealed herself in some secret place in the convent during the tumult. They are all in search of her, and cannot fail to find her, provided the doors and windows remained secure. The poor child cannot be without the limits of the convent."

"This is precisely Yoland, whom I carried away with Raymond's help; but the child received such a shock that I had to bear her, fainting, to the couch. . . . And now she is dying, consumed by fever. It is God himself who has sent thee to confess her. . . . Hast thou brought the Blessed Sacrament?"

"Yes; that is why I come with uncovered head. . . . . Let Rupert light the tapers in her cell."

Rupert immediately obeyed this order; the Abbot Daufer placed the Blessed Sacrament between the two tapers and adored it; then he arose and asked his friend where was the young girl. Manfred preceded him, and reached Yoland with a joyful countenance,

"My child," said he, "take courage; God grants thee a favor which will greatly rejoice thee:

the visit of the Abbot Daufer, the friend of thy father and the protector of thy family."

He had scarcely pronounced these words when the Abbot Daufer entered, and, holding out his hand to Yoland, who kissed it fervently, he said:

"My child, the Lord who has delivered thee from so many snares is soon about to give a new source of strength to thy soul and body. . . . Yes, thou mayst for long years yet celebrate his praises, and live for his glory and the consolation of thy parents."

Yoland replied, with an angelic smile:

"Venerable father, may the ever just and amiable will of God be accomplished in me! . . . I feel that I am very ill, but since thou desirest me to hope, I will not reject counsel. . . . May God and his Holy Mother realize thy prediction!"

Manfred approached in his turn, and asked her:

"Yoland, wilt thou confess to the Abbot Daufer?"

"Ah!" replied she, "what happiness! What a favor!"

"Aye, and after thy confession thou shalt have a still greater happiness. . . Happy child! the Master of heaven and earth has deigned to come to thee in this cavern, that his august presence may transform it into an abode of bliss. Yes, my daughter, he loves thee with an infinite love. . . . Ah! thy confidence in him will not be misplaced! He is prompt to reward those who suffer for him at the foot of the cross."

"What dost thou say, father? What! My

Lord and my God will come to me in this solitary cave? And I am soon to receive him? . . . Ah! if thou hast a veil, wouldst thou suffer that I cover my head, for it would be scarce decorous to receive him bareheaded, in presence of his angels."

The good hermit, weeping with emotion, went to seek a woollen cloak, the only veil which he could offer her. After that he went and prostrated himself before the Blessed Sacrament, whilst the young girl made her confession. And what a confession! . . . That pure and candid soul humbled herself devoutly before the minister of God, accusing herself of trifling faults, which she regarded as grave offences, and which were only the inevitable results of human weakness, the scruples of a young soul not yet enlightened by a matured judgment and the deliberate consent of the heart. Happy and innocent, the young girl had never ceased to taste the sweetness of justice and peace: the Divine love had always reposed within her as in a vessel of election, which it delighted to adorn with a celestial beauty.

As the Abbot Daufer penetrated into the interior of this virtuous soul, he admired the sublime influence of sanctifying grace, which, filling this young heart, had planted therein the germs of the holiest virtues. He beheld with a sort of astonishment the ardor of her charity, the liveliness of her faith, the immensity of her desires, the fidelity of her perseverance, the sublimity of her victories over self, and he adored the designs of God with ineffable tenderness. Her confession ended, the

Abbot Daufer arose to bring her the Sacred Host. But Yoland, turning towards him, her face radiant with an angelic joy:

"O father!" said she, "thou knowest now that I am a miserable sinner, unworthy of the grace which our sweet Saviour deigns to bestow upon me. Since he would, in his infinite love, come to visit me as of old the publican, aid me, I pray thee, to arise from my couch, that I may go and kneel before him! . . ."

Moved by so pious a demand, the Abbot Daufer could scarcely speak.

"No, my daughter," answered he, "thou canst not arise, so great is thy weakness. The violence of the fever exhausts thee. . . . Content thyself with rising a little on thy couch, like the paralytic in the Gospel. . . . Reassure thyself and hope. . . . When thou hast received the sweet Jesus in the tabernacle of thy heart, pray for us, pray for thy parents, who are suffering persecution for justice' sake, pray for the peace of the Church, that there may be but one fold and one pastor."

He turned away, and the young girl began to pray. . . . She humbled herself, full of love. . . . A holy impatience made her long for the moment when it would be given her to see, to adore, and to receive her Saviour. Rupert and Raymond walked before, carrying lighted tapers, and the Abbot Daufer, with the Blessed Sacrament, followed them, singing with the hermit the psalm: *Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes;** their voices resounded in the cave, echoing through the depths of the cavern its solemn strain, which seemed to proclaim, in the bowels of the earth, as in the celestial choirs, the glory of the Divine presence. Yoland heard them, absorbed in a sweet ecstasy which filled her heart, and she lovingly awaited the august Majesty which deigned to descend to her. At sight of the Sacred Host, her features were illuminated with a celestial joy, and, in an outburst of faith and love, she cried out :

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* Nations, praise the Lord.

"I am not worthy, O my Lord, that thou shouldst enter into my soul."

And, striking her breast, she bowed her head humbly. The Abbot Daufer gave her the Body of our Lord, saying :

"Receive, Yoland, the viaticum of the Body of thy Lord. If he disdain not to descend into these dark caverns, which he changes by his presence into an abode of delight, peopled with angels, cherubim, and seraphim, forming a perpetual chorus of adoration, into what a paradise will he not change thy soul, created to his Divine image, and enriched with the precious gifts of grace ? He comes not alone into thy heart. . . . He brings thee with his adorable presence new treasures of infinite value ; he loads thee with his sweetness, increasing in thee the ardor of his love. . . . He would fortify thee in the combat, that thou mayst obtain the immortal crown !"

Deeply moved, Yoland raised herself in an ecstasy of love to receive the amiable Jesus ; then, bending her head, she annihilated herself in adoration of the God whom she had received into her breast. The two men left her alone, and retired into the cavern, where they conversed on the events of the day. The hermit related to the Abbot Daufer how he had given hospitality to the wounded Ottocar, and how his mind had been tormented with anxious doubts in regard to Yoland, so near her persecutor. He told him of the terror of the young girl, her delirium, her fainting-fits, after which he had found her unconscious and almost lifeless. He did not fail to impart to him how he had prayed Ottocar to spare the rebels, and of the promise which the young Marquis had made to him that he would judge them as leniently as possible.

"He not only promised to take my advice," said Manfred; "he swore it by his faith."

"'By his faith'? But he has none," replied the Abbot Daufer. "He has publicly broken his promise of marriage to Gisela of Moravia; he has trampled under foot his word, and every feeling of honor. No, he does not respect his oaths, no matter to whom they are made, when his passions urge him on to perjure himself. Ottocar is a brave and valiant prince. He is generous, magnanimous, if you will; but he is headstrong, cruel, and inconstant.... His passions have hurried him from excess to excess. . . . He has not even shrunk from magic; he has committed fearful sacrileges, and has dared to assail a sanctuary consecrated to God, to snatch from the arms of the Queen of Heaven an angel of innocence and truth. No, I cannot think that he will remain faithful to his word. I even fear that at this very moment his retainers are already in pursuit of the rebels, and if they overtake them there will be a horrible massacre. I feel assured, too, that if he had got wind of the flight of Yoland, he would not have failed to place guards on the roads, to take her dead or alive. Beware, Manfred, that he suspect not her hiding-place, for if God calls not the dear child to himself, we cannot take too many precautions to shield her from the pursuit of her enemy. . . . Take care that thou lose her not by any imprudence. Knows the Abbess that Yoland is here?"

"No, my friend. However, Theotberga knows of the secret passage which leads to the cave, but hitherto has not thought of it. I sent her word to come alone to-night, behind the altar of the Virgin, two hours before midnight. Then I will softly open the little door, appear before her, begging her to come and see Yoland. . . . Perhaps the sight of the excellent Abbess would work a salutary reaction in the young girl, which would permit us to restore her to Pandolph and Adeltrude. Thou, my dear Abbot, canst await us here, then we three will decide what will be the surest and most rapid way to send her out of the country. Raymond, that brave and faithful yeoman from Mentz whom thou didst place in the service of Pandolph during the first days of his residence at Znaim, has always served his master with much loyalty and devotion. More than once he exposed his life to save him. Now, he saw Yoland born, has seen her grow up beneath his eyes; he loves her like a father, and was specially charged to watch over her at her entrance into the convent; I do not think a better guide can be found to conduct her to Boleslau and restore her to her parents."

"Thou art right," answered the Abbot, "but if I must remain so late in the cavern, word must be sent to the Prior of Znaim, that he may not be uneasy during the night at my absence. My escort must also be sent hence, and yet I desire that they enter not the town of Brunn."

"Rest easy on that point. I will have thy knights conducted to the inn on the hillside kept by the father of our Rutald. Their horses will be well groomed, and thy men well lodged, and sure to obtain good provender."

The Abbot Daufer immediately called Anolin and charged him to apprise the chief of the escort to send forthwith one of his men to the monastery to inform the prior. He added that the spearsmen were to take lodging with Rutald, and to be at the entrance of the cave at the dawn of day. Anolin went to the soldiers, whom he found here and there in the neighborhood, some lying on the grass and others talking merrily. He transmitted the commands of the Abbot to the leader of the troop, who immediately ordered the Terrible to mount his horse and announce at the monastery that the Abbot would not return till next day. The Terrible spurred his horse and rode off at full speed.

"Come on, comrades," said Anolin, "I am charged to put ye under cover from the buffets of the weather; will one of ye take me on thy crupper?"

"The weather matters little to soldiers covered with buff-skin from head to foot," replied the Bear; "but without a good piece of roasted beef and a pot of beer within one would shiver even at the fireside."

"All in good time," replied Anolin. "If thou wilt take me on thy crupper, we will even add to the pot of beer a good draught of that mead which often turns thy pate."

The Bear, without any answer, seized Anolin by the belt, and raised him into the saddle as though he were a feather, for so stout and lusty was the yeoman.

"To the inn on the hillside!" cried Anolin.

"To the inn!" cried the soldiers in chorus; "long live our landlord!"

"Long live his bacon and sausages!" said the Scarred.

"Long live his double-beer!" added Steel-Fist.

Then they set off at a quick trot, as if they were about to charge on a battalion. They soon reached the inn, and their first care was to stable their horses and groom them. All this time the house was in an uproar. It was continual coming and going from the kitchen to the dining-room. The hostess laid the table, the host was deeply occupied in trussing the joints, which he put on the spit, around which crowded the scullions, whilst the cellarer hastened down to the vault, whence he reappeared with great jugs of beer. Supper was soon served, and the attendants of the Abbot set to heartily. Rutald was busier than any one. As to the master of the house, with his immense fur cap, he went from one to the other, filling immense goblets which seemed like pails, crying out :

"On, comrades! to your health! By my faith, after your exploits at Brunn, ye might indeed repair your strength."

"Bah!" replied Porcupine, "we remained quiet, not taking the trouble to stir our lances. We simply served as escorts to our reverend Abbot, who wept because he had not arrived in time to put out the fire, and to snatch from the logs the two magicians, who were roasted like two pheasants. . . . Well-placed charity, verily! But our dear Abbot would draw two imps of hell out of the fire. . . . And, as I said to him, 'My lord, is there not an indulgence for roasting magicians?' he turned towards me indignantly and said : 'It is not for individuals to exercise justice ; the fury of the mob is always blind and senseless ; there are tribunals ; it is for them to apply laws and pronounce sentences.' I put my tongue between my teeth, and kept silent. But if the people could have seized Swatiza, I assure thee, without alighting from my horse, I would have struck the tinder-box and passed the lighted wick to those who carried the fagots to roast her ugly skin, already browned by the sun. The wretch once stole a little daughter from Burgundophore, my neighbor. Ah! if I caught her, I would make slices of her! It is said that the evil hag changed herself into an owl, or some say a cat, to escape the people. Aye, credit me, I pierced through and through with my lance every cat that I met this morning on the road to Brunn, hoping thus to relieve the world of Swatiza. But wickedness gains nothing by waiting, and, if I catch her some day, by my faith, she'll no more deceive her neighbors, and the Abbot will have more occasion for his eloquence."

Whilst Porcupine, already somewhat unsteadied by numerous bumpers, was giving forth the foregoing tirade, an urchin from the village rushed into the hall, crying in a voice choked by terror:

"Save thyself, Rutald! Four villains are coming at full gallop to seize thee and conduct thee to the prison of Brunn. . . . They declare that thou hast slain the Marquis. . . ."

"Too late!" said the spearsmen of Znaim, ironically; "too late, dear good friends, ye will find but the remnants of the supper. 'Sero venientibus ossa,'* as says the father-cellarer when one of us comes too late for supper. . . . Dear landlord, hast thou need of four good roasts? Make ready the spits, and place underneath thy largest dripping-pans, for the game is plump and fat. . . ."

With these words they arose, seized their lances, and, helmet on head, went out of the inn to receive the bandits unflinchingly. They did not appear for some time; for, on their way, they had arrested in some of the neighboring cabins three other heads of the riot, whom they forced to walk, strongly bound, in front of their horses. The sky was clear and limpid, and the moon, almost at its full, soon allowed the soldiers to perceive the minions of Ottocar issuing from the woods, with the prisoners who preceded them. The brave spearsmen judged rightly that the moonlight, shining on their helmets and polished arms, could not fail to betray their presence. Therefore, some re-entered the house, others slipped into the stable; others, behind a well surrounded by tufted trees, held themselves in readiness to rush upon the bandits. This plan succeeded wonderfully. The villains approached unmolested, and, arriving at the door of the inn, three of them dismounted, while the fourth remained to guard the prisoners. They advanced, brandishing their pikes, but scarcely had they reached the court than they found themselves confronted by eight formidable spears, and eight stentorian voices cried at once:

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* Those who come late find but the bones.

"Lower your arms, or ye are dead men!"

Hearing this shout, the fourth, seeing the danger, turned to fly, but the soldiers hidden near the well rushed out upon him, seized the bridle of his horse, and cried out:

"Stop, thou craven!"

They did not dream of resistance, for the odds were too great against them. The bandits laid down their arms and asked for quarter. Rutald immediately ran to the prisoners, unloosened their chains, and brought them to the table, saying to the retainers:

"We Gregorians bear no malice; we are always ready to return good for evil. Sit ye down, all four of ye, and drink a cup with the bowmen of the Abbot Daufer."

The theology of the hostess was not so accommodating. At sight of those who had come to arrest her son, she flew into a violent rage, and, with her hands on her haunches, was advancing towards the bandits to load them with abuse. But her husband drew her back by the dress.

"Wife," said he, "make not so much ado. Rutald knows what he's about, and thou shouldst not meddle in his affairs. . . . Dost hear, babbler? Return to the kitchen!"

And the landlord came into the room with a ham and a large jug of beer.

"Come on," said he, "set to work, friends! There is room here for every one, and the landlord of the Sun has no enemies."

The bowmen filled with quite a chivalrous politeness the glasses of Ottocar's soldiers, and each one clinked his glass with his neighbor's and proceeded to drink copious bumpers. When they had fully done honor to their hosts, the bowmen said to them:

"Now, dear comrades, place your cimeters near those pikes, which will render ye all the lighter, then remount your steeds, after swearing by your beards that while returning to Brunn ye will molest no living man."

Happy to have got off so easily, the brigands swore to do all that they wished, and returned to Brunn with lowered crests, thankful to have saved their skin. As to Rutald and the bowmen, they secretly proceeded the same night to the monastery of Znaim.

The Abbess Theotberga had passed the terrible night of the assault a prey to indescribable anguish. As Superior and as Mother, she felt the affliction and alarm of the poor Sisters and the young girls confided to her care. But seeing that the sacrilegious assailants had been stricken by the anger of God, and that they were forced to retire without injuring the virgins of the Lord, perceiving collected within the chapter hall all her dear children, who surrounded and embraced her, saying: "Mother, here I am!" she felt her soul filled with such profound joy that we can give no idea of it. All her children were so dear to her! She clasped them to her heart with ineffable tenderness; and, while embracing each of them, she looked for Yoland with trembling eyes. All at once she cried:

"And Yoland; where is Yoland?"

Pupils and religious looked at each other, and, struck with amazement, cried with one voice:

"She was in the chapel with us. . . . She, natheless, remained praying beside the Blessed Virgin's altar. . . ."

Immediately the lay Sisters, who all loved the daughter of Pandolph, went in search of her through the entire convent. Until day they hoped that she had retired to pray in some secret nook, of which there were many in the vast and ancient edifice. But by sunrise the establishment had been visited from garret to cellar, without discovering her. There was universal mourning. But no sorrow could be compared to that of the venerable Theotberga. A lay Sister then made a horrible supposition.

"After the shock of the assailants," said she, "when silence succeeded to the noise, we all supposed that the soldiers had entered the convent. . . . Perhaps Yoland, in the fear of falling into the hands of the assassins, hid herself in the great cellar! . . . My God! if she should have fallen into the great cistern! . . ."

In that age, when the art of conveying water from distant sources was but little known, there was constructed, at the Convent of St. Mary's, in an immense cellar, an enormous reservoir wherein the rain water which came through the roof, and the overflow of the moats in the neighboring meadows, collected. The walls were of cement, to stem the rush of the waters, and all around were filters of gravel and minerals to render them drinkable, clear, and limpid. That reservoir, as large as the ponds which are seen in gardens, was at least twenty feet in depth. It was surrounded by flags, and one could descend by some steps, cut in the rock, either to draw water, or in summer, when the water was low, to clear out the bottom of the basin.

At these words of the lay Sister, Theotberga immediately sent for some of the workmen of the convent. All the lay Sisters, ranged on the edge of the reservoir, held little lighted tapers, while the men let down to the bottom of the water a string loaded with lead, which they occasionally drew up. The lights which the good nuns carried were reflected in the ruffled waters, whence shone a thousand glimmers, falling on the walls and vaults. One would have said that these vast dungeons were the scene of a strange illumination. Every time the string was drawn up, the noise of the water made their hearts beat; every eye was bent anxiously on the reservoir. At length, when they were assured that the search had brought nothing to light, Theotberga, much relieved, exclaimed:

"My God, I return thanks to thee! I hope that my dear Yoland still lives."

Coming out of the cellar, the Sister portress came to announce to the Abbess the arrival of Rupert. Theotberga, knowing that he was Manfred's confidential man, hastened to the parlor. Rupert imparted to her the hermit's message, praying her to be behind the altar of the Blessed Virgin two hours before midnight. The Abbess questioned the messenger, but could not succeed in obtaining any explanation. Fear and hope struggled in her breast till evening, but she ceased not to beg of God to have mercy on Yoland and on herself.

When all the Sisters had retired to their cells to take their rest, Theotberga, anticipating the hour of the meeting, went down to the church and prostrated herself before the statue of Mary. She begged her to have pity on her sorrow, and not to leave her long a prey to this cruel uncertainty.

Often she listened, watching the great door of the church, where she presumed the hermit would knock at the appointed hour. But what was her terror, just when she had prostrated herself face downwards on the altar steps, to feel a hand tapping her lightly on the shoulder, while a voice said:

"Arise, Theotberga."

She immediately stood up, and, perceiving the hermit, she remained motionless.

"Mary, aid me!" were the only words she could utter.

"Do not be disturbed," replied Manfred; "think not that thou seest a spirit. . . . It is I, indeed, in flesh and blood."

"But how didst thou enter? I have here, at my belt, the keys of the church door; and, furthermore, it is fastened within by two bolts."

"And I ask thee in thy turn, where is Yoland? I learn that she is no longer at the convent. . . . Who then has borne her hence? . . . Where is she now? . . . Is it thus that thou takest care of her? . . ."

"Ah! Father, I beg of thee increase not my agony; . . . we have called her and sought her everywhere; the house has been searched, but she has not been found. . . . I had all the keys, and the door was not even opened to Rutald, who came to announce the defeat of the retainers of the Marquis of Brunn."

"But, Reverend Mother, where thinkest thou would she be? Carried off, it may be . . . or miraculously disappeared?"

"Carried off! and by whom? No one has entered, for the doors were closed, and they did not scale the windows. . . . Besides, I saw Yoland, with my own eyes, and spoke to her here, before this very altar, where she begged me to pray for her, for she suspected that they laid siege to the place to obtain possession of her, and deliver her to her enemies. Just then she left me, and I saw her no more. . . . O Father, I declare to thee that I speak the truth. . . . I bethought me betimes in my trouble that the Blessed Virgin had miraculously transported her to a place of safety. . . ."

"Yes, thou art right; thy dear Yoland is in safety, but thou must implore Mary to crown her favors by preserving her to us. . . . Wilt thou follow me?"

At these words, the Abbess closed her eyes, raised her clasped hands towards the miraculous statue, and, her heart swelling with emotion, followed the hermit, who led her behind the altar. Having reached the two pillars, he pressed the spring of the secret door, and said:

"Mother, dost thou not remember that when thou wert named Abbess, thou foundest, among the keys, a little secret key, to the ring of which was fastened a sealed paper with the inscription: 'To be opened by the future Abbess'? On this parchment was written that, at the time of the Hungarian invasion, this invisible door was constructed for the spouses of God, which gave access to subterranean passages."

"Yes, yes," said Theotberga, striking her forehead. "The trouble I have had has taken away my memory."

"As soon as I learned what was taking place, I sent Raymond hither; Yoland was kneeling between the pillars; Raymond opened the door, saw her, lifted her, stopping her mouth, and brought her to my cave, having carefully closed the secret door. But, alas! the poor child has given way under so many emotions, and, after a sleep of some hours, she awoke consumed by a burning fever, which threw her into a violent delirium. I sent for the Abbot Daufer, who had come to Brunn to quell the popular tumult. At my request, he confessed the young girl, and administered to her the holy viaticum. That divine remedy filled her with so lively a joy that her condition is greatly improved; but she is still so weak and exhausted! In a word, I hope thy presence may complete her cure."

They had arrived, conversing thus, at the end of the subterranean passage, and at Manfred's cave. He begged the Abbess to wait a little, whilst he went to prepare the young girl for the unexpected visit of Theotberga, for such a surprise might be injurious to her. He found the Abbot Daufer at her bedside, seeking to console her with gentle kindness. Somewhat restored, Yoland was gently disputing with the Abbot, who wished to dissuade her from returning to the convent, where she would be exposed to further persecution from the Marquis.

"Let it be supposed, my child, that thou art dead or have at least disappeared. . . . During the first days Ottocar will guard every outlet to obtain possession of thee ; but, later, finding his watchfulness vain, he will cease his search, and thou canst be restored without danger to thy father."

The hermit entered at this moment. Yoland, addressing him, asked :

"Father, is it possible that, as the Abbot Daufer wishes, I must never return to the convent ? Who can know the tears, anguish, and distress of my good mother Theotberga ? How sorrowful will be Sister Cunegonde and Sister Eribert ! All my friends will weep for me, and thou wouldst, should God spare my life, that I depart secretly, that I abandon the beloved shelter of my childhood, the beloved nuns, my dear affectionate companions, without even saying farewell to them. They will suppose that I have fallen into the hands of the assassins, and will never cease to weep over my fate ! Nay, nay ; the Abbess Theotberga will be inconsolable, for I know her great affection for me ! . . ."

"And if the Abbess were informed of all that has happened ?" asked the hermit. "Then, if she should desire to see thee, dost thou think, Yoland, that she would not be afraid of these solitudes, or would she come to thy pillow like a tender mother ?"

"O good Fathers ! wherefore dost thou awaken in the heart of a poor orphan these hopeless desires ? It seems to me that if I saw my good mother at my side, I should be instantly cured."

"If that be the case, thy fever will soon disappear," said the Abbot Daufer; "for Father Manfred has such solicitude for thee that I am very sure he will bring hither the reverend Abbess sooner than thou thinkest."

"Ah! Holy Virgin! grant me that consolation," cried Yoland.

The Abbot Daufer went in search of the Abbess to lead her into the little cell. When she saw her enter, the young girl almost sprang from her couch in her great joy. Theotberga, who controlled herself better, advanced gently to embrace her. Yoland threw her arms round her neck and pressed her to her heart, without uttering a word. After some moments, looking at Theotberga, she said:

"O mother! how hast thou come into this solitude through the darkness, and the way so long? I know that thou lovest me as though I were thy daughter; but the charity of God alone could give thee courage and fortitude to endure all the horrors which my presence has brought upon thy convent. May the infinite goodness of Jesus reward thee! Thou art restoring life to me; I feel it running through my veins! O mother! I see thee again! . . . I assure thee that, if death must come, it will be sweet within thy arms."

"Calm thyself, my child; do not agitate thyself needlessly; thou art still somewhat feverish, and excitement may make thee worse. I will tell thee later all that took place; but now rest in peace."

"Yes, mother. . . . Tell me, at least, do my mistresses and companions know where I am?"

"They are very sad, calling thee everywhere, hoping that thou art near, and canst hear them. . . . Leonida, Iseult, Gilla, and Elisa remained long hours prostrate before the Blessed Virgin's altar. Jeanne the Fair and Jeanne from Austerlitz are fasting on bread and water; Gertrude and Hildegarde have promised, if thou art found, to place on the statue of Mary, one a rich diadem, the other a belt studded with gold beads. Even Lidwina and Paula, those giddy romps . . . but they have such good hearts. . . . Dost thou know what they did? They excited general emotion in the study hall. . . . They both rose suddenly, ran to Sister Cunegonde, and, throwing themselves on their knees before her, said, weeping: 'It is we who are the cause of all these misfortunes; our sins have drawn down on the convent the anger of the Blessed Virgin. . . . We have so often promised her to be docile, submissive, pious, and we have kept none of our promises! She is punishing us now, by taking away our dear Yoland; . . . but, in future, we will be good, Sister Cunegonde; we will say our prayers fervently, we will not make our companions laugh any more in church, we will be very devout at Mass: dost thou think the Blessed Virgin will give us back our sister? We ask thy pardon for all the grief we have caused thee, and of all our companions for the bad example they have received from us.' . . . And so saying, they kissed their mother's feet, and wished to do likewise to their companions, who would not permit it. All shedding tears they said: 'Arise, ye have done enough!' At dinner they deprived themselves of the third course, which was cream and cake, and brought it to the poor, distributing it to them for thy intention in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and added thereto some money, begging them all to pray for thee! This evening, before supper, all thy companions went in procession, with lighted tapers, to the altar of Mary, where they made a vow to offer her a heart of gold containing their names. But what shall I say of our poor blind Sister Columba, who has been paralyzed and bedridden for twenty years? When she heard of thy disappearance she burst into tears, and, raising her hands to heaven, she said: 'O my Lord Jesus! look down upon thy poor servant, and have mercy on her. Restore my poor Yoland, who so often kept me company, and fed me so lovingly! What hast thou done with her, O Lord? Hearest thou not our sighs and lamentations? Jesus, restore her to us, I supplicate thee with all the fervor of my soul, and I offer myself, through gratitude, to suffer, by the help of thy grace, a great increase of my cruel pains.'"

At these words Yoland could no longer contain herself; she again embraced the Abbess, and said, in a tone of deep emotion: "Oh! what charity! Good Sister Columba, wherefore wouldst thou suffer so much for me? O Mary! our advocate, now that thou hast heard their prayers, and that they will know me to be safe, in place of increasing her pains, cure them entirely, in reward for their goodness and charity. Mother, I entreat thee, thank the Sisters and my companions for their affection for me. I pray God, in his infinite mercy, to reward them!"

The Abbot Daufer now spoke. "Yoland," said he, "be calm, and try to sleep; the Abbess will come again to see thee to-morrow, and will remain longer with thee. But to-night, since we are together, we would decide on the safest way to remove thee from the pursuit of the Marquis and from new insults. . . . Pray, my child; abandon thyself with filial confidence to the prudence of the venerable hermit, who has so miraculously saved thee, with the help of divine Providence."

He blessed the young girl, and retired with the hermit and Theotberga into the outer cavern, where they held a long conversation. All were of opinion that, on the recovery of the young girl, Raymond should accompany her into Bohemia, to the sanctuary of Boleslau, where he would transmit her to the arms of her much-loved parents.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RUINED CASTLE.

One radiant summer morning two travellers were journeying along the road which led from Moravia to Bohemia, and urging their horses to great speed. An old, worn saddle and a knotty bridle did not improve the miserable appearance of their steeds. The strangers were themselves somewhat shabbily apparelled. One of them seemed to be a countryman, and the other, who sat on the crupper, was a youth whose face was entirely covered by an immense hood. He clung closely to his companion, and often concealed himself behind his broad shoulders. Here and there, on the same road with the two travellers, and going in the same direction, were a score or so of men clad in hunting costume, divided into little groups, and holding in leash hounds and rabbit-dogs. They seemed as if in search of a favorable spot to let them loose in pursuit of game. The passer-by, in meeting the hunters, would probably have overlooked the two peasants, who seemed as if wending their way to some neighboring town, or, it may be, would have taken them for lackeys carrying the provisions and the game for the hunters.

The elder of the two horsemen was the faithful Raymond, Pandolph's old servant. Our readers will doubtless have recognized him before this. As to the young man, riding on the crupper, it was the sad and beautiful Yoland. Scarcely had she recovered, when the Abbot Daufer and Manfred, in order to shield her from the persecution of Ottocar, made her depart, under this poor disguise, for the shrine of Our Lady of Boleslau, where she was to find her father. As to the hunters, they were the bravest soldiers of the Abbot of Znaim. Armed with pikes, daggers, and javelins, they were, while affecting to be occupied with the pleasures of the chase, to escort the young lady beyond the frontiers of Bohemia. They arrived there without accident, and took leave of Yoland, returning to render an account at Znaim of the success of their mission.

The fugitives arrived one evening in a little village where the inn was crowded with travellers. All the apartments were occupied. They were forced to sleep under a shed almost in the open air, where bundles of straw served them for beds. Raymond at first thought that this multitude of people were repairing to the blessing of some church, for at that time those sort of festivals always attracted a great concourse of people, and gave rise to a species of much frequented fair. But having risen early and set out with the crowd, our two companions arrived, after some time, at an immense field surrounded by venerable trees, in the midst of which an ancient oak spread its great branches. Beneath this giant tree was a turf-covered mound, on which was erected a throne covered with scarlet cloth and resting on bearskins. The whole field was already filled with an immense multitude from all parts of the kingdom.

It was Duke Wratislas, lately named King of Bohemia by the Emperor Henry IV., who was coming, according to the usage of the times, to dispense justice to his vassals. Behind him walked his pages carrying, on golden dishes, the regal crown and sceptre; after which came the esquires with his sword, lance, battle-axe, and buckler. The great barons of the kingdom, richly armed, mounted on noble steeds, were followed by their esquires and men-at-arms, bearing the banners of margraves, counts, or barons, who held their fiefs from the King. The procession was closed by aldermen and provosts, the judges and magistrates of the crown, and finally by the executioners, bearing instruments of torture.

The King mounted the throne. The Archbishop of Prague blessed the multitude, and the heralds passed through their ranks, sounding the trumpet, and crying aloud: "Whosoever has lawsuits, disputes, claims, accusations, exceptions, or privileges, let him submit them to the judgment of the King." And the whole people cried with one voice: "Long live the King!" After that, there was profound silence. Then bishops and abbots, margraves, counts, viscounts, castellans, knights, and the humbler vassals advanced to the foot of the throne and took the oath of fidelity to the new

King, and lowered their banners before him in token of fealty. Then the judgment commenced. Two potentates had a dispute in relation to a forest—the King admitted them to the ordeal of arms. They entered the lists, their lances were broken after a few passes, they then threw away the stumps and fought with their swords. One of them was vanquished, and, consequently, he lost his suit; the scriveners took note of it, and the combatants retired after saluting the King.

The steward of an abbey was accused of having traitorously put to death the son of a baron. He denied the crime in presence of the King, and appealed to the judgment of God, declaring himself ready to undergo the ordeal of boiling water. The King said to him: "Thou wilt leave thy hands in boiling water whilst the *Credo* is recited twice." A vessel of boiling water was brought. The King's chaplain intoned the *Credo,* in which the people joined. The accused plunged his hands into the kettle, and, at the appointed time, he drew them out and raised them to heaven. The skin remained whole though the heat had been more than sufficient to strip it to the bone. The entire people gave a shout of great joy: *Justus es Domine et rectum judicium tuum.* *

The falconer of a baron was next brought up, who, through revenge, had plucked out the eye of an enemy. As the relatives of the wounded man would not accept the redemption-money, the King pronounced, according to the code, the penalty of retaliation. The executioner then reddened a steel rod, and, thrusting it into the eye of the falconer, plucked it out.

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* Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgments are great.

Then came the turn of a servant, accused of having taken a false oath on the Gospel. The King applied the law in its full rigor. Immediately the executioner seized the hand of the culprit, placed it on a block, and cut it off with a hatchet; then he cauterized the mutilated wrist with a red-hot iron, to stop the blood, spread some salve upon it, and bandaged it tightly.

Amongst the Lombards and even the Teutons the creditor could not deprive the debtor of his sword or arms. A Jew was made to appear before the King for having disregarded this law in relation to an impoverished knight. The King condemned the usurer to a heavy penalty, in spite of his tears and protestations. The Jew was obliged to pay it, to avoid being cast into a dungeon at the discretion of the plaintiff. The people cried: "It is well done! Burn the miscreant alive, he who crucified the Son of God!"

A groom, charged with the care of the hounds of a noble lord, accused a peasant of having stolen from him a Dalmatian hound, spotted black and white, and having sold it to the forester, who was also summoned to appear. He came with the animal. The King said: "Let the law be put in force." The peasant was obliged to take the dog on his shoulders and run three times round the meadow, amid the laughter of the spectators.

A robber, accused and convicted of having stolen from the margrave a falcon of great price, had nothing wherewith to pay the fine. The king condemned him to have two ounces of flesh taken from him by the very falcon. The wretch was placed on a bench, face downward. They fastened a falcon to his back, who tore at him until the executioner took him away.

A highwayman was convicted of having robbed a traveller. As he was blind of one eye, he was condemned to lose his nose; such was the law. The first time, the thief lost his eye, the second, his nose was cut off, and the third, his ears. The executioner took a kind of razor, and cut off his nose to the roots.

Two sorcerers were burned forthwith on a pile erected in the middle of the field. A blasphemer had his tongue cut out. A magician, who had slain a child for his hellish rites, was tortured with pincers and then burned. The King pronounced sentence on several trials touching civil suits, wills, boundaries of lands, the validity of contracts. His wisdom and justice were so great that, the court over, the whole multitude cried: "Long live the just King!"

These times were undoubtedly cruel, and the penal code barbarous; but they at least dispensed with the swarm of lawyers, so skilful in dragging out lawsuits and clogging them with flaws and technicalities which Solomon himself would not have been able to refute; so ready at manufacturing long memoirs, and at obtaining high prices for their counsel, and never failing to add some dollars to their bill if one has the misfortune to stop them in the street to ask, "How goes my case?"

Yoland and Raymond had taken care not to make themselves conspicuous. Hidden in the crowd, they heard the King's judgments, and, when the sitting was over, the grand marshal knelt before the King to announce the arrival of an embassy from the Marquis of Brunn. The sovereign welcomed the four barons graciously. They advanced in splendid apparel, and, bowing before the King, "Sire," said they, "we come to inform thee, in the name of our master, that a noble damsel has been stolen away from the Convent of St. Mary. He supplicates your majesty to deign to have the abductor pursued, and, if discovered, to have him conducted, well guarded, with the maiden, to the Castle of Brunn."

The King replied that he would willingly oblige the Marquis of Brunn, and asked the description of the fugitives.

The ambassadors answered:

"My lord, the young girl is about sixteen years of age. She is of tall stature. Her abundant ringlets are as yellow as gold. She has blue eyes, a fine forehead, a snow-white complexion, oval face, and vermilion cheeks."

Poor Yoland, who had been very pale since her illness, felt herself suddenly grow red. Her face burned; she shook in every limb. It seemed to her that every one was looking at her.

Raymond, perceiving her agitation, whispered:

"Courage!" And as the crowd was dispersing, they glided in among them.

Instead of continuing their way to Bohemia, they turned and journeyed at random in the direction of Germany. They had already passed through a number of German villages, when they came, one day, to the gates of a great city, where they found a vast multitude assembled within an immense enclosure. They thought that a tournament was about to take place, and went into a neighboring inn, manifesting a great desire to see the spectacle. Meeting a man of great height but of a frank and pleasant aspect, they asked him at what hour the festival would commence.

"The festival!" fiercely replied the Saxon; "say rather the slaughter which is to take place by order of the tyrant Henry. After having massacred the Saxons, he is now amusing himself in slaying some of his other vassals. Know, then, that he convoked all the barons to a diet. He had a proclamation proclaimed as far as Oldenburg, where, at Rustadt, reigns Count Hunon, the Nestor of the German lords. This old man, quite infirm and entirely devoted to the practice of good works, excused himself on account of his great age for the impossibility of his appearing at the diet. Henry, much enraged, accused him of treason, and intimated to him that he must present himself before him to atone for his contempt, bringing with him a champion to engage in single combat with the champion of the emperor. Thou knowest that such is the usage of the country. The worthy old man, feeling his conscience free from the crime of which he was accused, set out, accompanied by a chosen escort and his son Frederic, a noble and valiant youth, whom he loves with inexpressible tenderness.

"Hunon presented himself the day before yesterday at the palace, and, bending the knee before Henry, loyally excused himself for having remained in his castle. 'Believe, sire,' said he, 'that I acted not from a spirit of revolt, but rather because of my infirmities. . . . Even my present journey has enfeebled me much, and, it may be, imperilled my life. Despite this, I am come at the renewed command of your Majesty to prove to thee that I am ever faithful, as I was to thy grandfather, Conrad, and to the Emperor, thy father. I have brought with me, to do thee homage, my only son Frederic, who is scarce twenty years of age, but whose wisdom and valor are beyond his years.'

"Hunon's noble words filled the archbishops, dukes, and other lords with admiration. They regarded him with a sort of religious respect. But the cruel tyrant, looking angrily at him, replied:

"'I hold thee as a traitor, and the ordeal of the sword alone can wash away thine infamy. Thou shalt have for thy champion thy son Frederic; mine shall be an African lion.'

"At these words the tender father shuddered; but, full of confidence in God, he left all things in his hands, and replied to the prince:

"'King Henry, may Jesus Christ be, between thee and me, judge of my innocence!'

"It is to-day," continued the Saxon, "that Frederic is to combat the lion. Strangers, pray for the noble knight."

With these words he went inside the paling. Yoland felt herself moved to compassion. The tyrant she regarded with horror. She prayed from the bottom of her heart to her Angel Guardian, begging him to interest Frederic's angel in his cause, that he might obtain strength to triumph over the terrible beast. She entered, with Raymond, the immense arena, which was a mile around. At the extremity of the lists were erected two dais, richly hung with silk and velvet, ornamented with gold lace and fringe, which shone like precious stones. Under one of these canopies sat the execrable tyrant, in company with the princes of the empire; the venerable Hunon and his knights occupied the opposite pavilion. He was a fine old man, though bent by age. His hair, which was as white as snow, fell over his shoulders. His face was pale and sad. His lofty brow contracted with the weight of his great sorrow; and one would have said that he was sightless, so greatly had his sorrow destroyed his energy. When he appeared in the tent, all the people shed tears of pity, inwardly cursing the barbarity of the tyrant.

The heralds and kings-at-arms rode round the arena, then stopped before the throne, awaiting the signal of the king. Henry made a sign with his head. Then they sounded the trumpet and proclaimed as follows:

"Frederic of Rustadt is about to prove by the ordeal of the lion that the Count, his father, is not guilty of treason towards the crown."

At the same time the young Frederic appeared; he advanced towards his father, and, kneeling, asked his benediction. The Count, supported by two esquires, arose and said in a firm voice:

"I swear to God, to the king, and to all the princes of the empire that I have never failed in my duty to the crown. Go, my son, fight bravely for the innocence of thy father! I bless thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and I promise the powerful Virgin Mary that, if thou comest forth victor in the combat, I will erect in her honor a temple and a monastery in the states under my jurisdiction."

The old man ceased, fell back in his chair, and bowed his head on his chest. Going down into the lists with his esquires, Frederic armed himself. He girded on his sword, donned his helmet, and commanded his men-at-arms to retire without the enclosure. He was a tall, handsome young man, straight and well formed. Cries and acclamations greeted his appearance, and the damsels seated in the balcony threw him roses, waving towards him, according to the custom of the times, bright-colored scarfs. At another flourish of the trumpets, eight horses, magnificently harnessed, dashed into the lists, drawing the iron cage which contained the fearful beast. Then, the horses being unharnessed and led away, a keeper sprang on the cage and opened the door. The lion came out, took a few steps, and looked around him, astonished by the concourse of people. Then his roar resounded through the arena and sent a thrill through every heart.

Frederic had had manufactured a figure of a man covered with scarlet cloth. He took it in his arms, and, his sword between his teeth, he advanced, calm and cool, to meet the fierce beast.

At sight of the young warrior the lion stopped short, shook his flowing mane, lashed his sides with his tail, and with glaring eyes and parted jaws took some steps towards Frederic, then paused. But the young lord continued to advance towards the beast with a firm and decided step. The brute then glared at him, tore up the soil, and, resting on his hind paws, prepared to spring. . . . Frederic threw the figure to the lion; he caught it in his teeth, and began to tear it furiously, uttering low growls. The knight profited by the moment, and by a quick movement, threw himself upon the beast and plunged his sword into his heart.

Immediately a great shout of joy burst forth from the multitude: *Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei cœli commorabitur.*[*] Just then the venerable Hunon had closed his eyes in fervent prayer. But, hearing the sacred anthem, he arose, and, at sight of the enormous beast stretched at the feet of his son, he thus gave thanks to God: *Iste pauper clamavit, et Dominus exaudivit eum, et de omnibus tribulationibus ejus sal-*

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[*] He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob.

vavit eum. * The heralds-at-arms had come down into the lists. They escorted Frederic to the feet of the king amid the plaudits of the crowd; moved by the transports of the people, and fearing a revolt, Henry praised the courage of the young champion. He embraced him, bestowed on him the insignia of knighthood, and put a costly ring on his finger. He endowed him with vast estates, and freed the Count, his father, from all fealty.

It is needless to say what part Yoland had inwardly taken in the triumph of Frederic. She thanked Heaven for it. Alas! was she not in a condition similar to that of the young knight? Her father, too, had been placed under the ban of the empire; he was flying, deprived of all consolation, to escape the tyranny of the emperor. She implored heaven to proclaim the innocence of Pandolph, as he had glorified that of Hunon. But already the crowd was beginning to disperse, and Raymond, returning to the inn with the young girl, said to her:

"Noble lady, we cannot now proceed towards Boleslau, after the promise which King Wratislas made to the Lord of Brunn. I know of naught better than to bring thee to Rome and place thee beneath the protection of the Pope. He is the father of the faithful, the joy of the afflicted, and the defence of the weak who have recourse to him."

Yoland was distressed at the thought of undertaking so long a journey through countries ravaged by the enemies of God. However, full of confidence in God and his Blessed Mother, she instantly set out for Bavaria. But scarcely had the young girl and her protector journeyed for two days along the banks of the Danube, when they met a numerous troop of horsemen. They judged it prudent to avoid them, and, following the course of the river, they intended to cross at Passau. These knights formed the escort of the Archbishops of Prague and Olmütz, who were journeying to Rome, summoned by Pope Gregory, to justify themselves before the Holy See. Jaromir of Prague, brother of King Wratislas, aspired to the supremacy of the See of Olmütz, which Bishop John contested with him. Jaromir had then declared war upon him, but Gregory, on being informed of it, placed an interdict upon his diocese and commanded him to come to Rome to explain his conduct.

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* This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

The two prelates travelled with a numerous train of clergy and soldiers, and in a style as sumptuous as accorded with their nobility, their elevated rank, and great wealth. With the Prince of Bohemia everything bespoke his royal origin; the Moravian bishop, though he was not of such illustrious blood, yielded nothing to him in magnificence. Both were mounted on superb palfreys richly caparisoned. Their harnesses were wrought with gold and precious stones. Wrapped in ample cloaks of purple garnished with ermine, the two prelates were each accompanied by two esquires, who rode on the right and left of their steed, whilst a white mule preceded them, on which was borne the episcopal cross. Behind them came a great number of pages and lackeys, clad in gorgeous livery; then the clergy of the hierarchical orders, mounted on fiery steeds. The prelates carried with them a great deal of luggage—the treasures of their chapels, chalices, censers of pure gold, mitres adorned with precious stones, rings, clasps, copes, ornaments of velvet brocade. A battalion of soldiers, well armed, brought up the rear.

Raymond immediately recognized some of his friends among the train of the Moravian bishop, and, fearing that some annoyance for Yoland might result therefrom, he retraced their steps to journey along the Danube, as we have said, and take the road to Augsburg. This was a very wise precaution. But none can foresee the future, and this resolve, which really seemed of use to them, had for both the most vexatious result. Having crossed the Danube at Passau, they determined to continue their way to Augsburg. For this purpose they wended their way over waste lands and lonely forests, where they were more than once in danger of being devoured by wolves.

Once, when they had been journeying all day through countries desolated by war, they came, at sunset, to a large ruined building. This feudal manor stood in a charming spot on a hill covered with thick trees. Streams of pure water gushed from the rock and flowed through an uncultivated garden, where there could be yet distinguished, overgrown with weeds, broken urns and fragments of sculpture, shattered, doubtless, by an infuriated soldiery.

Raymond went in under the deserted porch and through the rooms on the ground-floor. Everything was in the same state of dilapidation. He found at length a small apartment with a chimney, and he decided that this would be the best place for them to spend the night. He then unharnessed their steeds and led them into a little enclosure surrounded by walls, within which grew a fine, close grass. After this he returned to the ruin, kindled a little fire, and spread on the floor some handfuls of straw which he had found in an adjoining room. Taking some provisions from his wallet, they made a frugal supper, and retired to rest.

Raymond soon fell asleep, but Yoland could not close an eye ; the solitude, the darkness, this lonely habitation, all filled her with a vague terror, which kept her awake and disturbed her in spite of herself. Whilst the little fire burned on the hearth she kept her eyes fixed on it. It seemed to her that this was a sentinel watching over her rest. But gradually the fire died out, and the room was left in utter darkness. The young girl, overcome by fatigue, was dozing lightly, clasping to her heart the little statue of Mary, which she invoked in her fright.

The night was already far advanced. Suddenly Yoland awoke with a start, and, opening her eyes, she thought she perceived a ray of light which glimmered on the wall and then disappeared. The blood rushed to her heart; she leaned upon her elbow, and thought she heard a dull sound in the distance. She called Raymond, and said:

"Hearest thou aught?"

"What is it?" asked he.

"I fancied I heard a footstep," replied Yoland, "and I saw a light pass along the end wall."

She had scarcely finished speaking when a new light flashed on the darkness, and again disappeared, to reappear a moment after. This time the whole room was flooded with it. Our travellers, bewildered and half asleep, saw four wild-looking men enter. One of them cried:

"Who are ye?"

"Poor travellers," answered Raymond, "on our way to Augsburg."

Yoland, who had taken off her hood to sleep, was immediately recognized as a woman, spite of her man's dress. Her long hair flowing over her shoulders had betrayed her before she had time to perceive it herself. One of the new-comers took her by the arm, and, making her rise, he said:

"My dear child, thou wilt follow us."

Yoland, trembling in every limb, threw herself on her knees before the man, begging him to have pity on her.

"Be tranquil," said he; "no one will harm thee; but we have need of thy care for a poor sick person."

"At least, let my companion come with me," added the young girl.

"No, no; he must follow us," replied another.

The unfortunate child felt herself taken by the hand and led away from Raymond, who vainly sought to rush after them. The eastern side of the castle rested on a steep rock, at the foot of which ran a torrent. Long staircases, which seemed to lead to vaults, ended in large apartments which received light and air from the side of the abyss. The strangers first entered a long porch, at the end of which opened a vaulted room, sustained by pillars of solid stone. Strewn in every direction were kettles, iron spoons, stoves, crucibles, hammers of all kinds, pincers, chisels, engraving tools, and all manner of implements, whose use was too evidently explained by the appearance of two money-presses in the middle of the room. Men of hideous aspect were keeping them in motion by iron cranks, which served to make the stamp on the surface of the material. They all worked silently. They only communicated with each other by signs; and the machine worked with surprising ardor and activity. In a corner there were immense heaps of candlesticks, vases, crowns, crosses, reliquaries of gold and silver, all battered and twisted, which were to be thrown into the red-hot crucibles. Yoland perceived with horror that she had fallen into the hands of coiners, and that the place where she was was a den of outlaws.

The man who had brought her led her through several rooms furnished with coarse beds, on some of which she saw men asleep. He stopped at the door of a little room tolerably clean and lit by a lamp. Yoland perceived therein a couch, on which lay a woman who appeared to be still young.

"This is my wife," said the outlaw; "have a care of her. She is weak, and has need of thy charity; be a sister to her." And casting a softened glance on the poor sick woman, two great tears rolled down his cheeks, and he went out in silence. Yoland approached the unfortunate, saluted her in a friendly manner, and offered her her services. The young woman smiled, and, taking her hand, she exclaimed:

"I shall die easy, now that I see myself in such gentle hands. Tell me, what are thou called?"

"I am called Yoland; and thou?"

"Ida," replied the invalid.

Yoland cared for her with much charity, and, though she was frequently obliged to pass through the workshops, all the men were respectful to her, for which she thanked God, never ceasing to recommend herself to him. Every morning Yoland knelt at the foot of her bed, and, drawing from a little leather bag hanging at her side the statue of Mary, she recited her prayers. Ida watched her without saying anything; but the devotion, love, and serenity with which the young girl prayed filled Ida's soul with a sort of uneasiness which she had never felt before. The piety which glowed on this sweet and gracious countenance, the sweetness of its regards, the humility and recollection of a soul which breathed its deep fervor in a gentle murmur of the lips—all this brought into the mind of poor Ida a host of new sensations. One day, after Yoland had finished her prayer, she said :

"My dear Ida, kiss the statue of the Blessed Virgin, and confide in her goodness."

Ida did what she was asked; and, addressing the young girl, she said :

"Who is that beautiful Lady whom thou wouldst have me kiss ? Perchance it would be thy queen ? She is very sweet to look upon, though her face is full of supreme majesty ; and is that child the son of thy king."

At these questions Yoland was overcome with astonishment.

"What !" said she, "art thou not a Christian, my poor Ida ? Thou dost not know the Mother of God and the Redeemer of our souls, who came down from heaven, made himself a little child for us, and died on the cross both as God and man ?"

"I know no other god than Odin, son of the giant Boor, and brother of Vili and Ve, the most powerful gods, creators of heaven, of earth, and of man, to whom Odin gave a soul and life."

At these words Yoland, more and more amazed, regarded the sick woman uneasily.

"Ida, art thou not German ?" asked she.

"I am from Luitilz," replied Ida, "but we are not Christians. On the contrary, my countrymen are always at war with those Danes who adore the Christ. It is, indeed, for saving a Christian that I am here in this place. Banished from the forests of my country, and exiled with Dunon, my husband, I was forced to make my home amongst strangers.

"Our last war with the Saxons was disastrous to both parties, and each nation retired to its own territory, carrying away their wounded and prisoners. Among ours was a noble and valiant knight, the son of a great Saxon prince, and scarcely eighteen years old. But he was so strong that none could resist his blow, and in the battle he had struck down no less than three of our chiefs. Having had his horse killed under him, he continued on foot to fight like a lion. At length, surrounded by a battalion of our troops, he was obliged to surrender, and was brought a prisoner into our forests.

"The tribes whose chiefs had been slain by the haughty Saxon demanded that he should be immolated on the altar of Odin to appease the shades of his victims. It was decided that it should be so.

"I was the daughter of the high-priest of Odin; the young captive was dragged into my father's cabin, and bound to a log while awaiting the day of his death. Being the only daughter, I lived with my father, under the paternal roof, and to my care was confided the prisoner, who gave no sign of fear, nor seemed to be at all afflicted by his misfortune. It was proclaimed in all the country that in three days the high-priest of Odin would sacrifice on his altar, beside the sacred oak, the powerful Saxon warrior. All the men of the tribe assembled and encamped with their tents near the altar of sacrifice. The night before the fatal day they were all collected in the great meadow, talking over the new campaign which they were planning against the Saxons, and performing, by the light of resinous torches, funeral dances, with which they always preceded sacrifices.

"I was alone beside the hearth, and the prisoner, kneeling on a log, was praying as thou hast just done. He raised his hands to heaven often, invoking a Virgin whom he also called the Mother of God; it is natheless that beautiful Lady whom thou dost embrace with such love and respect. I was moved to compassion, thinking that this young man was to be slain at the dawn of the following morning. But when I heard him exclaim: 'Emma, my dear sister, farewell; when thou learnest my sad end, pray for me,' then I, who had shed such bitter tears when the corpse of my poor brother killed in battle was brought home, could not now contain my sobs, and I said: 'Prisoner, hast thou a sister?' 'Yes,' answered he—'one whom I love with all my heart.'

"At these words, seized with great compassion, I rushed towards him, I cut his bonds with an axe, and I said to him: 'Go, fly, noble youth, and console thy sister!' I ran to the stable, saddled a horse, and added: 'Ascend the mountain, cross the ford of Reknitz, and journey on to the right.' The young man leaped into the saddle and rode off.

"Four hours later day began to break; I heard the warriors approach, and I feigned to be asleep beside the half-extinguished fire. My father came in with Dunon. He glanced around, and, seeing that the prisoner was gone, rushed towards me in a fearful voice : 'Where is the Saxon ?' I pretended ignorance. 'What ! what sayest thou ? Where is the prisoner ?' Then, seeing the axe, which still lay near the log, he continued : 'Behold, I say, wherefore didst thou leave the axe beside him ?' I answered that I had been chopping wood for the fire, but that, falling asleep, I had doubtless forgotten it.

"The consternation was great amongst the warriors. They leaped into their saddles and rode in the direction of the Elbe ; but having reached the banks of the Reknitz, they found it so swollen by the rains that they were obliged to retrace their steps. Their rage cannot be described, and they wished to immolate me on the altar of Odin. Then my father spoke. 'We will sacrifice another Saxon,' said he ; 'my daughter shall be banished from my hearth and from the land.' Dunon, my husband, took the gold and silver which was his share of the booty, and we departed with three horses. On our way we met these coiners ; Dunon joined them, and we came to inhabit the deserted manor, where they carry on their trade, at the same time assisting the robbers of the country."

Yoland listened with affectionate attention to the sick woman's story. She said with gentle gravity :

"Ida, believe me, renounce thy religion of blood. Thy false god Odin desires the sacrifice of human victims ; our God, on the contrary, to give us an eternal life, deigned to send his own Son, Jesus Christ, who was God like unto his Father. He came down on the earth, took human flesh, suffered and died on the cross to redeem our soul. His sacrifices are all of love, and, if we truly love him, he will raise us up from death, and will make us eternally enjoy his divinity in heaven."

Ida, full of astonishment, gazed at Yoland.

"And with thy God in heaven," asked she, "shall we also see the beautiful Lady?"

"Undoubtedly we shall," replied Yoland. "She was always a Virgin; the Son of God became man in her most pure womb. When Jesus raised the dead and ascended to heaven, he wished that his Mother should also rejoin him there. He had her borne up by angels, and crowned her Queen of heaven and earth. Ida, thou hast saved that young Christian, and Mary would reward thee for so noble a deed by giving thee Paradise. There thou wilt thyself be more radiant than all the queens of earth."

"And what must I do to obtain that happiness?"

"Believe in Jesus Christ, receive baptism, observe his law, which, with the help of grace, is sweet and easy."

At this moment Dunon entered, and, seeing his wife serene and radiant, asked her:

"My dear Ida, must thou not admit that thou hast a skilful nurse?"

"Oh!" replied Ida, "she has told me such beautiful things. I will repeat them to thee afterwards. Imagine, Dunon, that the Paradise of the Christians is more beautiful than Valhalla.*

The proud pagan shook his head, and answered coldly:

"Well, well, strive to recover as quickly as thou canst."

But Ida, consumed by a burning fever, which was slowly undermining her, was hastening to her end.

Yoland never left her bedside. She wiped the sweat from her brow, and made her take a few mouthfuls of cold water; in a word, she bestowed such skilful and affectionate care upon her that Ida could not refrain from exclaiming:

"But thou art good, my friend! Thou art more than a sister to me. Are all Christians like thee? If I were a Christian, would I become as good as thou?"

"Better than I," said the modest Yoland; "for baptism would render thy soul whiter than snow, clearer than pure water, more brilliant than the sun!"

"Well!" replied the sick woman, "baptize me, and make me as good and beautiful as thou art."

"I cannot do it until thou dost believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in the blessed Trinity."

"I believe," said Ida with sweet transport, "and also in the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. . . . O my dear Yoland! baptize me, for I feel that I am dying!"

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* Valhalla is the paradise of the Scandinavians and the residence of Odin.

Then Yoland raised her a little, took water, and baptized her. After the holy water had fallen on her forehead, Ida felt herself filled with a celestial joy, which shone in her eyes and on her face. She ceased not to cry out:

"Yoland, I feel heaven within my heart; I would that I might soon die, to see Jesus and the beautiful Lady!"

This joy, this interior peace, much improved her condition, and Dunon, who often came to visit her, could not gaze long enough at her; he said:

"Ida, thou art more beautiful than ever; what has thy nurse done for thee? She is not a young girl, but a heavenly being! . . ."

Dunon thanked Yoland with respectful admiration. Two days later Ida felt herself failing. Yoland called Dunon, who hastened in, bringing with him some of his companions. She feebly moved her lips, pronouncing the names of Jesus and Mary, though she could scarcely articulate. Opening her eyes, she perceived her husband, called him, then raising her voice a little, "Dunon, become a Christian," said she. "Farewell."

She again pronounced the name of Jesus, and calmly expired. The coiners forced poor Dunon out of the chamber of death, charging Yoland to watch over the deceased. The following day they dug a grave in the little enclosure, and laid therein the corpse of poor Ida. Yoland planted a little cross over her grave, and prayed this happy soul to obtain of God the grace to escape from her captivity and soon to reach the tomb of the holy apostles.

Ten days had passed after this sad event. Yoland, confined in the little room where Ida had died, remained a prisoner, often shedding tears. She had declared to her captors that no living soul should know the mystery of those vaults; all was in vain. When she asked for tidings of Raymond, they did not answer. She spent day and night in continual fear, praying her dear Madonna to have pity on her.

One night she heard, in the adjoining room, an unaccountable noise—the sound of voices and of loud laughter. They were discussing the pillage of a sanctuary, and she seemed to hear the voice of a woman above all the others. Yoland listened breathlessly and trembled like a leaf. After a long pause, during which the robbers had gone to supper, she heard them re-enter the next room; a coarse voice said:

"Go and sleep yonder, where thou wilt find another woman."

A moment after the young girl saw her come into her little room; she was a very tall woman, carrying a lantern, and she bolted the door after her.

Yoland trembled, but, having glanced at the new-comer, she suddenly recollected her, and, throwing herself at her feet, she said in a low voice:

"Swatiza, aid me for the love of God!"

The Bohemian lowered her lantern, looked at the young girl, and cried:

"Yoland! thou here?"

She then seated herself on the little bed, and Yoland, shedding abundant tears, related to her all her woes. For perhaps the first time in her life Swatiza wept, so great was her compassion. She took Yoland's hands, and, pressing them affectionately, said:

"My noble benefactress, fear not. I know all the secret outlets of this castle, and I shall take thee out without any one being the wiser for it. Even here, under this bed, there is a trap which goes up and down. Those bricks which thou seest there are not cemented; they can be removed very easily."

"But I would also deliver Raymond," said Yoland.

"I shall take care of him, if he be yet alive," replied Swatiza; "but, meanwhile, there is no time to be lost."

She drew the bed into the middle of the room, raised one brick with a piece of iron, and had no trouble in raising all the others. The Bohemian then touched the spring of the trap, and it opened. She took the lantern, and, followed by Yoland, went down little winding stairs which brought them to the edge of the stream.

CHAPTER XIV.

MANFRED OF TRAVEMUND.

When the two women had come to the foot of the rock, Swatiza, who usually walked barefoot, took Yoland on her shoulder, and bravely plunged into the deep water, which foamed and seethed around her. Soon she laid her precious burden on the opposite bank. Yoland, much alarmed by the noise of the torrent, warmly thanked her liberator. As they walked along, Swatiza related how she had succeeded in escaping at Brunn on the day when the two magicians of the court had been burned.

"I knew nothing," said she, "of that sudden revolt, and I was quietly walking through an obscure street, when I heard behind me the cry of 'There she is—the witch! To the fire with the witch!' At the same moment four men seized upon me. I thought I was gone; however, some of them began to say: 'Bring her to the Hungarian Square—the pile for the magicians is ready. Be quick!'

"The crowd grew greater every moment. It was impossible for me to attempt to escape. I heard them then accusing me of having stolen children. A sudden thought struck me. Having reached a neighborhood which I knew, I said to the crowd: ‘Christians, if I must die, let me restore a child which I stole yesterday. . . . God may then have mercy on me!’ ‘Where is it? the poor creature! O infamous thief! where is the child?’

“I assumed a penitent air, and replied: ‘I placed her in that house yonder; but do not alarm those worthy people. . . . Place yourselves here; keep guard at the door; I shall return. Only give me time to go up and come down with the poor innocent.’ ‘Go,’ said the mob, ‘and return speedily.’ With these words they crossed their lances before the door. Now, this house leans against a hill. I rushed up the stairs, and leaped out the garret-window on to the neighboring lane, at the end of which was a cross-road where several paths meet. I rushed into the windings of a veritable labyrinth, and took refuge in the house of a poor workman. I afterwards learned that the people waited some time at the door, and seeing that I did not reappear, they went up into the house, and searched it from top to bottom. Of course, they did not find me, and it was rumored abroad that I had changed myself into a cat or a bird. When night came, I glided secretly over the ramparts, whence I was let down with the help of some friends, and was then outside the town. I crossed the moat safely, and came to seek my fortune in Germany.”

Swatiza proceeded towards the cabin of a shepherd whom she knew. She said to Yoland:

“Noble maiden, follow my counsel; continue thy way as a pilgrim, and journey alone, at least till thou dost meet with some prelate, or, better still, some noble lady repairing to the holy places, who will charitably admit thee among the number of her dependents. Thou hast provisions in abundance, besides, here is a little purse; do not mind if it be old and well worn, thou wilt find therein enough gold for the journey and thy residence at Rome. But pull down thy hood, and rub thy face with herbs, which will somewhat darken thy complexion, for now thou art too beautiful, and that very beauty will expose thee to misfortune. Speak the Sclavic tongue, to avoid having speech with Germans, some of whom are for Gregory, and others for the Anti-Pope; these latter might do thee harm. Thou hast learned Latin at the Convent of Brunn; if thou, perchance, art passing by an abbey, thou wilt be enabled thus to hold speech with the monks; but be prudent even with them. I know several of them who detest the Pope, because he forbids them to sell their benefices to the delegates of the Emperor. The Pope calls that simony, from a Latin word which I do not understand. . . . Moreover, Pope Gregory exacts that they live holily, and it seems to me he is right."

"Thanks for thy good counsel, Swatiza. I will recommend myself to my good angel, that he may guide and lead me safely to the tomb of St. Peter. I will also pray for thee, that God may lead thee into the good way and withdraw thee from the wild and wandering life which thou art leading. I trust he will grant thee the grace to save thy soul."

"Ah! lady," replied the Bohemian, "thank

God for having been brought up in Christian piety! As for me, I am the child of a family of gipsies and thieves, who taught me to live by stealing from my earliest years. When I had stolen a chicken from the market, or linen from a laundry, my mother caressed me; but if I returned in the evening with empty hands, she would beat me and leave me supperless. And now I am a wretch, worthy of the malediction of Heaven."

"My friend," said Yoland, pressing her hand, "I hope that the Lord, who leaves not a glass of water without reward, will not forget the service thou hast rendered me. . . . But, I pray thee, think also of Raymond, and save him in thy charity."

They had reached the dwelling of the shepherd. It was still night. Swatiza knocked at the door.

"Ulpon," said she, "here is half a mark of silver; guide this young pilgrim to the highway; thou wilt arrive there before sunrise."

"Ay, ay, Swatiza," said Ulpon, who was a stout and lusty yeoman; "thou hast become a devotee just now. . . . But it would seem that in place of wearing the sackcloth and lacerating thy shoulders with strokes of the discipline, when going to seek indulgences, thou dost it by proxy! I'faith, that is good. . . . But if the poor lad be burdened with thy sins, I fear he will be overcome before he reaches the middle of the wood."

"Gibe an' thou wilt, babbler, but hasten and have a care of the youth. Farewell, dear Lando, pleasant journey to thee, and be not uneasy. May God go with thee!"

And the so-called Lando set out with the shepherd. When they had reached the highway, the latter pointed out to Yoland the way to Augsburg, and took leave of the young pilgrim, to return to his cabin. The poor child, left alone, knelt on a stone, and, drawing from her pocket the statue of Mary, she recommended herself to her protection. She prayed her to be her way, her guard, her light, and her defence during the course of her long and dangerous journey. Then she arose, with a light heart and a mind full of vigor, strength, and firm resolve. She was no longer the timid child of years before; she walked on confidently, and with as much courage as though she had been escorted by valiant warriors.

About the hour of Tierce, she felt the need of some food. Swatiza had put a loaf of bread in Yoland's wallet before leaving the den of the coiners. She sat down in the shade, by the bank of a stream, and commenced her frugal repast.

At this moment, she perceived another pilgrim. Attracted by the coolness of the place, he sat down, opened his satchel, and took out a little cup, half a loaf, and some slices of ham wrapped in chestnut leaves. Yoland knew by his dress that he was a Moravian. She regarded him attentively; he was entirely unknown to her. Still she thanked God that he had sent her a companion whose exterior seemed worthy of respect. He was a man of advanced age. His grave face, his distinguished mien, was rendered still more venerable by long white hair falling over his shoulders. The young girl, in her borrowed garb, turned towards him and saluted him graciously in the Moravian tongue, and said:

"Praised be Jesus Christ!"

"Eternally," responded the old man, scrutinizing his young companion. "Thou art natheless my countryman, good youth?" said he. "Where is thy country? It seemeth not to me that I have met thee at Brunn, at Znaim, or at Olmütz."

"In truth," replied Yoland, "Zwittau is far enough from the cities thou hast mentioned. It is situated on the frontiers of Silesia."

"Zwittau!" replied the stranger. "I went thither once with my father when I was a child; so I scarce remember it. What is thy name? Whither art thou going?"

"I am called Lando," said the young girl, "and I am going on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, so as to obtain the deliverance of my father, who was unjustly condemned to exile by his cruel enemies."

"Poor child!" exclaimed the pilgrim. "To undertake so painful a journey! May God and his holy Mother hear thee! Listen. I am also going on a pilgrimage to St. Peter of the Woods, in the *Val Laggarina,* and I offer to accompany thee with my whole heart, for thou dost inspire me with interest. Only I will not be going as far as thee. I made a vow to the Blessed Virgin to visit the shrine of St. Peter of the Woods. It is an ancient chapel, situated amongst the Alps, on the confines of Italy. It was built by Théodelind, Queen of the Lombards, and the Popes who were contemporary with Pepin and Charlemagne enriched it with numerous indulgences, as well as the churches of St. Augustine of Pavia, St. Ambrose of Milan, and St. Matthew the Evangelist at Salerno."

"I willingly accept thy company," said Yoland; "and I return thanks to God for having found some one to guide my inexperience in such a long journey. The Lord will reward thee in his goodness."

They soon proceeded on their way, reciting prayers and psalms. The Christians of that period assisted so assiduously at the offices of the Church, that frequent repetition established in their memory the psalms, epistles, gospels, and graduals of the holy Mass.

They then conversed on political events in Moravia. The pilgrim especially loved to dwell on the complications which were brought upon the empire in consequence of the unjust anger of Henry against Saxony and Thuringia. He deplored the new war of extermination which the King had just declared against these unhappy provinces.

"After having snatched Bavaria from Duke Otho to invest Duke Guelph with it," said he, "he now wishes to obtain the vengeance he has sworn against Rodolph of Suabia, Berthold of Carinthia, and other potentates of the empire. . . . Henry oppressed them like slaves; he confiscated their domains according to the whims of his hate and fury. . . . The whole of Germany was in tumult. . . . Some espoused the cause of the king, others combated for the liberty of the empire, which the enemies of God, of the Church, and of the people devastated by murder, incendiarism, and pillage."

Yoland saw at once that her companion was not a man of low extraction. She asked him his name.

"I am Theobald of Jamnitz," replied the pilgrim. "While still young, I was admitted to the court of the old Marquis of Brunn as a page, serving and carving at his table. As I grew in age I was instructed and exercised in the handling of arms, and I became esquire to the Marquis, and fought with him in Italy during the campaigns of the Emperor Henry, father of the present sovereign. The Marquis had a son named Ottocar, whom he confided to my care. Under my control, he grew in beauty as in noble sentiments; he became a brave knight, full of generosity. Unhappily, these noble qualities were marred by a proud and haughty spirit, which would brook no counsel. And then perfidious courtiers, base flatterers, full of avarice and malice, flattered him and led him more and more astray. Scarcely had his father called him to share in the government of his states than he committed two grave crimes. He first allowed himself to be led by evil men into showing himself hostile to the true and lawful Pope Gregory, favoring the excommunicated, to the great scandal of his people; then he sought to espouse, before all and in spite of all, a young girl at the Convent of St. Mary. . . ."

"But," interrupted Yoland, concealing her emotion, "was he not already betrothed to Gisela of Moravia? So, at least, I heard said."

"Certainly," replied Theobald. "I gravely remonstrated with him and warned him, pointing out the fatal consequences of such a foolish marriage, the shame of having broken his word, the anger of the Duke, who would be capable of marching upon Brunn and putting all the inhabitants to the sword. . . . It was in vain. Blinded by pride, he sent his soldiers to assail the convent. . . . But the sacrilege did not go unpunished. At the news of this attempt the inhabitants of the country took up arms and massacred the vandals. Next day they rushed into the town and burned alive Ottocar's two magicians. I was in the Marquis's apartments when he gave the order to his retainers to surprise the convent; hence he suspected that I had made known his designs to the peasants. Yet, I swear to thee that I heard not one word that he said to the officer of the guard. However, neither my fidelity nor my former services, nor the care I had bestowed on his youth—nought could disarm him. He accused me of treason against his father, and if I had not taken refuge with my friend Manfred, he would have sent me to the scaffold as a traitor."

"I have often heard of Manfred," said Yoland, not pretending to know him; "he is a hermit in the neighborhood of Brunn. Some consider him a great saint, others regard him as a powerful magician, whose spells can make the earth tremble, darken the sun, ruin the crops, and overflow the rivers. It is even said that he can give speech to animals and converse with them. He has, they say, at his service bears and wolves, whom he sends on the path of the deer. He calls the birds, and they obey him; then he sends them with letters in their beak to the great Shah of Persia or the Sultan of Babylon, who, it is said, pay him tributes."

"What nonsense, my son!" replied Theobald; "these are the inventions and calumnies of the excommunicated, on whom Manfred has made war, whose plots he overthrows, and whose plans he defeats. The Abbot Daufer of Znaim and he are two men of eminent holiness, who honor the true Pope and sustain him throughout Moravia, Bohemia, and Germany. They denounce simony, and declare aloud that the priests of the Lord should not touch the sacred body of Jesus Christ except with pure hands, and with chaste heart and thoughts, because he is the Lamb without spot, purer than crystal, brighter than the sunlight. These wretches, viler than the dirt, calumniate Manfred, and pretend to consider him a sorcerer. That is not astonishing on the part of people who are audacious enough to impute to Gregory the crime of simony with which they are corrupted, and the vice of luxury with which they are infected. To insult him they use the coarsest epithets, calling him craven, demon, hell-dragon! They are so stupid and ignorant that they dare to reproach Gregory with having invented the obligation of sacerdotal celibacy, whilst the holy fathers and the doctors of all ages, from the Apostles to our own time, cease not to repeat it on the clergy. They accuse Manfred of sorcery, because he lives in his cavern a life more angelic than human."

Lioba rejoiced at these words of Theobald, and the praises which he bestowed on her dear benefactor even increased the sentiments of profound veneration which she cherished in her heart towards him. Turning to her companion, she said:

"But how did this Manfred come to inhabit that solitude, those caverns, where, it is said, for so many years he has led a life of penance?"

"Friend," replied Theobald, "the hermit Manfred is an illustrious person, of high birth, for he is the descendant of the Lords of Trauenwald, who formerly possessed so many lands on the Baltic Sea, and swept the seas as far as Livonia and Sweden. They governed nearly all the isles of Gothland, Oesel, and the Archipelago of Abo, as far as the Sea of Finland.

"Manfred passed his youth in a celebrated monastery of the Diocese of Bremen, where his studies brought him into contact with Adalbert, then Archbishop of Bremen, so celebrated for his ardor and zeal for the liberty of the Church, for his lofty mind, the extent of his learning, power, and wealth. So much merit, alas! was marred by a pride which would brook no rival. Being called into the council by King Henry, he wished to reform the empire according to his will, and was the cause of a host of troubles.

"His studies finished, the youthful Manfred

and orphans, his liberality towards the poor of Christendom, on whom he poured, as in a beneficent shower, the treasures of his wealth: all these virtues, the true glories of the episcopal mitre, shone in Manfred with so bright a light that his renown extended to all the churches of the north, where his name was held in great veneration by the people.

"When he was informed of the cruelties which the pagan tribes of Scandinavia were heaping on the new Christians, his heart was filled with holy indignation. He joined with the bishops, abbots, and neighboring princes, raised troops, and with the help of that army waged a terrible war on these fierce nations. He rescued their victims from the torments which awaited them, freed their prisoners, compelled their oppressors to repair all the disasters which they had caused by burning, pillage, and the devastation of fields, of cities, churches, and monasteries. The ardor of his zeal was so great that he went to attack them in their very forests, where he took from the victors the fruits of their rapine. The prisoners were brought in chains to Christian territory; there they were condemned to rebuild the churches and dwellings with their own hands. They had to carry themselves the bricks, the sand, the mortar and cement, necessary to build the towers and ramparts of the fortresses which were to defend the country from their incursions and attacks.

"For several years Manfred governed his church as a prelate and defended it as a warrior; he en-forced discipline among the clergy, justice among magistrates, but when his people were at peace, alas! there suddenly came a terrible war to disturb his repose.

"Several Saxon princes, forgetting all Christian moderation, and jealous of the power of the Archbishop of Bremen, took arms and united to impose unjust tributes upon him. The Archbishop appealed to his suffragans, who sent troops and assistance to the metropolis. Some marched in person at the head of their standards; of this number was the valiant Manfred.

"The Saxon army had, among its chiefs, several bishops who were vassals of these princes, through the fatal custom of investitures. The emperor or prince gave the investiture of prelates the title of fiefs, and chose for bishops rather men of the sword than churchmen, so that they might be found ready to second them in the intestine wars so common in our days. Fighting in the ranks of the Archbishop of Bremen, Manfred had frequent encounters with the Saxons. He defeated them several times, and forced them to return to their territory. Winter meanwhile came upon them. In the spring of the following year hostilities recommenced. The Saxons marched with imposing array against the army of Bremen, and ravaged everything on their way, burning the grain, stealing the cattle, massacring the old men, dragging away the women and children, whom they sold as slaves into Courland and Pomerania.

"Having organized his troops, consisting of the most valiant men of the country, Manfred entered on a campaign, and advanced with his allies to repulse the unjust aggression of the Saxons. He met the enemy on the banks of a little stream. Forthwith, not waiting to encamp, he ranged his troops in order of battle and commenced the action. The chiefs threw down the signal of defiance; the trumpets sounded the charge; and the two armies met. The first shock was terrible. At the head of his men, Manfred threw himself upon a margrave, and broke his lance against the breastplate of his opponent, who fell from his horse grievously wounded. Pushing his steed into the thickest of the fight, he struck right and left with the splinter of his lance, breaking the helmets of all the knights whom he met on his passage, and at length succeeded in snatching from one of them a lance to replace his own. Then he continued to make a fearful havoc in the enemy's ranks. Just then the Bremenese began to yield, but by the bravery of Manfred they regained the advantage, became reanimated, and rushing impetuously forward, they forced the Saxons to retreat into their trenches.

"At this moment a knight of great stature rushed impetuously to meet Manfred, who, after having routed the vassals of the Count of Catelemburg, was proceeding to repulse those of Alberstadt. The knight wore a hauberk of very fine steel. The crest of his head-piece was of eagle's feathers, supported by two lions of silver above the visor, which entirely concealed the face of the knight. His scarlet coat-of-arms was embroidered in gold, and his charger covered with a net-work of close mail which descended to the hoofs; it had a chafing-bit of steel surmounted by a horn.

"The soldiers of Manfred, at sight of this strange adversary who rushed upon their chief, gave a great shout. Manfred perceived the danger, turned round, and, lance in rest, darted upon his new opponent without giving him time to stop and prepare to receive him. The shock was so violent that their lances flew in splinters, their shields were broken, and their horses fell and rolled in the dust.

"In the twinkling of an eye the combatants arose, drew their swords, and dealt each other such terrible blows that their breastplates were battered and their helmets broken. Manfred wielded the sword with remarkable skill; however, his adversary closed upon him and gave him a slight wound. Suddenly, Manfred made a leap and disengaged himself, then, making a thrust with his sword, he struck the unknown knight in the back, and he fell senseless.

"Manfred ran towards him and loosed his helmet to make him prisoner. What was his grief! On raising his visor he recognized Bishop Evremond, his friend. . . . He almost fainted on the body of his adversary. . . . A deep groan escaped his lips.

"'Evremond!' cried he, 'O friend of my childhood, dost thou know the hand which has stricken thee? O miserable consequence of our fierce and barbarous times! . . . The bishops, ministers of peace, anointed of Christ to be the pastors of the people, the sources of the charity of the Redeemer, are forced, by the cruelty of pagans, and still more by the avarice of the lords, to take arms, in spite of the command and the canons of the Church, which ever laments that she sees us oftener with the sword in our hands than with the cross, and more frequently with the helmet on our heads than with the mitre. Pardon me, O Evremond my friend! pardon thy murderer! . . .'

"Saying these words, Manfred removed his helmet. Evremond opened his eyes, and, recognizing Manfred, he said to him:

"'My friend, I pardon thee from the bottom of my heart; thou art not guilty. . . . Thou art only defending thyself against the unjust aggression of our princes.'

"And holding out his hand, he prayed Manfred to give him his in token of friendship and reconciliation; then, feeling himself sinking, he continued:

"'Manfred, man of God, confess me, and absolve me from my sins, and remember me in the Holy Sacrifice.'

"The warriors moved away weeping. Manfred heard his friend's confession, gave him absolution, blessed him, and drawing his episcopal cross from beneath his helmet, he gave it to him to kiss. Evremond expired in the act. Manfred had his consecrated remains removed from the field of battle, and, seeing that the Saxons were completely routed and flying in all directions, he gave orders to sound the retreat.

"The war ended. Manfred returned, still sad and sorrowful, to his episcopal palace. He went in mourning with all his household, and for thirty days had Masses said and the Office of the Dead sung by the canons of his household for the repose of Evremond's soul. He remained in his palace, wore sackcloth, fasted on bread and water, ceased to celebrate Mass, and, going down every night to the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, he scourged himself, and then prostrated himself with his face on the stone, praying and weeping till dawn. The month of mourning being over, he convoked a chapter of the canons, and entering the hall with bare feet and a cord round his neck, he prostrated himself before them, saying: 'Here is the slayer of bishops; here are the hands stained with the blood of the Lord's anointed; here is the cruel wolf who is no longer worthy to be thy pastor or thy father. Archdeacon, do thou arise and give me the discipline before all present.' And uncovering his shoulders, still bruised and bloody with his daily austerities, he desired the Archdeacon to inflict on him the canonical penance, whilst his priests, affected to tears, recited the Penitential Psalms, which were interrupted by their sobs.

"Manfred arose, all bloody, and turning towards the canons, he said to them: 'Deacons, will ye repair to Bremen with the Archdeacon, and beg the Archbishop to choose for ye all another pastor for this church, which I have stained with blood?' At these words, he threw himself on the ground and kissed their feet, imploring them by the heart of Jesus Christ to elect a peaceful pastor who would triumph over his enemies by humility, meekness, and by prayer ; one who would, in a word, turn the other cheek to him who smiteth. 'Yes,' said he, 'it is with these arms that lions are subdued, that serpents and dragons are trampled under foot, and wolves are changed into lambs. My brethren,' continued he, in conclusion, 'pray for me, and may God have ye in his care.'

"A deep murmur of sorrow greeted this discourse. All of them rushed from their stalls, and crowded round Manfred, exclaiming: 'Do not abandon us, venerated father!' But he answered: 'Let none of ye touch me with those hands which daily hold the Lamb of Peace on the altar, for I am a man of blood ;' and he returned to his apartments.

"The episcopal palace had a door opening upon the Oder. In the darkness of night Manfred, in the garb of a pilgrim, departed by this secret outlet. A faithful boatman was awaiting him with his boat. He soon arrived on the opposite bank. When the worthy man had landed the prelate, he knelt before him, and kissed his hand, melting into tears, and then returned to the city. Manfred passed through Germany and arrived at Breslau, where he remained some time. Thence he passed into Bohemia, and made a pilgrimage in Moravia to the shrine of Saint Mary at Brunn. He remained there three days, prostrate before the altar, without taking any food. He passed the night in prayer under the porch of the church, taking only a few hours' rest on the threshold of the door.

"The people who crowded to the temple curiously regarded this pale and attenuated pilgrim, ever motionless and shedding tears. Every one asked who he was, but no one knew him; and every one, as usual, made his little romance about the strange man. Some thought him some famous robber who, after his conversion, was seeking to avoid the world's notice; others were assured that he was some margrave, visiting the shrines of Germany in expiation of his crimes; others took him for one of those Danish Christians who had invaded England, bringing fire and blood to the convents and churches, and massacring the monks at the foot of the altar; others affirmed that he had been taken at Rome under Benedict IX. in the time of the three Anti-Popes, after having committed some thefts in the Lateran Palace and in the Basilica of St. Peter, but that Pope Damasus II., having released him from excommunication, he was journeying to gain the indulgences at the holy places, so as to shorten the canonical penance.

"On the morning of the fourth day, Theotberga, who had just been elected Abbess, sent the chaplain to him asking him to repair his strength, exhausted by such a long fast. She said to him, also, that so long as he wished to remain at the shrine she would be happy to furnish him every day with the necessary food. She begged him to pray for the wants of the Holy Church, so cruelly disturbed by the pride and covetousness of the great ones on earth.

"Manfred was pleased with this holy place. He explored the neighborhood, and at length discovered, among the hills which lay between Brunn and Austerlitz, the cavern which he now inhabits. He entered it, examined all its compartments, and installed himself in one of its caves. Every morning, at daybreak, he went forth to repair to the church, where he assisted at the offices, always prostrate on the ground. After the church was closed, he would proceed to the convent, where the Sisters appointed to distribute alms would give him a loaf of black bread, which he took into his cavern.

"The fame of his sanctity soon spread through the neighborhood, and, at evening, as he returned from the shrine, numbers would be waiting at the entrance of the cave to kiss his hands and recommend themselves to his prayers. These demonstrations afflicted the holy man. One day, as he was waiting, in the court of the convent, for his usual alms, the Abbot Daufer, who had come to visit the Abbess, passed quite near him. The lackeys who were in attendance on him being somewhat delayed by a carriage which barred their path, Manfred approached the Abbot to hold his stirrup. When thanking the pilgrim, who had already seized the horse by the bridle to fasten him to the wall, the Abbot Daufer glanced at him. He thought he recognized his features, and was seeking to recall where he could have met the pilgrim. As he walked slowly towards the convent, the Abbot seemed as if disputing with himself, shaking his head, and speaking half aloud:

"'Still, the more I look. . . . But it is impossible, it is an absurd idea.'

"He at length went in to the Abbess, but silent and thoughtful.

"'What makes thee so pensive, my lord Abbot?' asked Theotberga; 'what strange adventure has befallen thee?'

"The Abbot Daufer, rubbing his forehead and shaking his head, suddenly asked her:

"'Mother,' said he, 'tell me how long since this pilgrim came here, he who remains so long prostrate before the altar of the Blessed Virgin?'

"'About six months ago I saw him for the first time,' replied the Abbess; 'he speaks our Sclavic tongue badly, and, from his speech, one would say he is originally from Friesland or Scandinavia.'

"'Great God! it is he!' cried the Abbot joyfully.

"The venerable Abbess looked at him in surprise, and knew not what to think. However, the Abbot Daufer became calm, and having conversed with Theotberga on the object of his visit, took leave of her and remounted his horse. He immediately proceeded, with his escort, to the pilgrim's cave, alighted, and, leaving his horse with one of his soldiers, bade them await him. Manfred had just returned to his cavern, and, seated beside a clear fire, was eating a piece of black bread.

"Without saying a word, the Abbot Daufer ran towards him, embraced him warmly, shedding tears of joy, and exclaiming:

"'O Manfred, my dear Manfred, dost thou not recognize thy friend Engeland, now the Abbot Daufer of Znaim?'

"Much agitated by this unexpected arrival, the hermit gazed long at him, recognized him, and said:

"'Thou art happy, O my friend! to have become a monk, and withdrawn thyself from the seductive attractions of the imperial court. Alas! I am no longer worthy of thy friendship, for thou art holy, and I . . . (he hid his face in his hands) I am a sacrilegious murderer!'

"'Thou art a greater penitent than I,' replied the Abbot Daufer; 'and thy fault is long since washed away in the abyss of divine mercy by thy contrition and penance.'

"'Engeland,' replied the hermit, 'in taking the habit thou didst change thy name and way of life, and didst become much different from what thou wert as esquire to the Emperor. But I—I was a bishop; and I did not renounce the profession of arms, and while making war, although indeed in a just cause, I slew Bishop Evremond with my sword; for he died beneath my blows! . . . Is my penance proportioned to my crime? Can a life-long sorrow wash away so fearful a crime? . . .'

"On learning that Manfred was a bishop, the Abbot Daufer threw himself on his knees, and would have kissed his hand. But the hermit drew quickly back in alarm: 'Do not, dear Daufer, it is a blood-stained hand!' So saying, he raised him and related his sad history. The Abbot consoled him, and leaving his friend, returned to the monastery.

"On his arrival, he hastened to write to Walram, Lord of Travemund, and brother of Manfred, with whom he had been associated when they were both pages of the Emperor Conrad, and afterwards chamberlains to Henry III. He took care not to reveal the place whither his brother had retired, but he consoled him with the assurance that Manfred was still alive, and dwelling in a solitary place, where he passed his days in penance. He begged Walram to reveal this secret to no one excepting the Archbishop of Bremen. As soon as he had written this letter, he sent a carrier with it to Travemund. Walram answered immediately, thanking him with delight, and adding to his letter the sum of a thousand gold marks for his brother, which he has continued to send every year.

"Manfred would not relax from his severe abstinence, and Walram's gold enabled him to aid the unfortunate. He became the father of the orphans and the providence of the poor of the country. Thou canst not imagine how many tears he has dried; how many young girls he has enabled to enter religion, or marry respectably; how many prisoners he has delivered from the hands of merciless creditors; how many old men he has fed; how many poor priests he has supported at his own expense. He passes most of the night and day in prayer, and receives in his cavern all who come to solicit his aid or counsel. . . . The wounded are brought to him that their wounds may be dressed, for he knows the preparation of the most precious balsams; the young Marquis Ottocar himself, being wounded in the revolt of Brunn, had recourse to his remedies, and owes him his life."

Yoland listened attentively to Theobald's recital, and felt therein a sweet satisfaction. She thanked Divine Providence for having granted to that holy man the grace to save her from so many perils, and to shield Count Pandolph, her father, from the fury of his enemies. They continued to journey along, discoursing thus of edifying things. Yoland performed for Theobald all the offices of a servant. Scarcely would they reach a lodging ere she would hasten to wash his feet. She made his bed every day, and when it happened that they found but one poor pallet, she would give it to her companion, and sleep on a handful of straw.

Theobald was never weary of admiring the charity and thoughtfulness of him whom he supposed to be a young man. But he felt a sort of pity to see him so frail and delicate. He was, at every moment, edified by the piety and devotion of his companion, whom he often saw at prayer. When they came to a church, he always confessed and received Communion, with a modesty and recollection more like an angel than a human being.

On arriving at Trent, they heard bad news from Italy. The ambitious and impious Gilbert of Ravenna, though not formally proclaimed Anti-Pope, as he was, some years later, at the Synod of Bressano, was declaring himself openly hostile to Pope Gregory. He was intriguing for the Papal crown, and was already considered by every one as the virtual Anti-Pope, and whoever was not for the holy Gregory warmly espoused the cause of Gilbert. After the Council of Rome, which excited so much anger in the Emperor Henry, and among the rebellious clergy, because of the abolition of investitures and the canonical penalties proclaimed against incontinence, Gilbert remained at Rome to carry on his secret intrigues against the holy and austere Gregory. That pontiff made every effort to free the Church from civil tyranny, and to reform the lives of certain members of the clergy, who should surpass in purity the light of the sun. Now, Gilbert, to conciliate the favor of Henry and pave his own way to the pontificate, conceived the horrible design of assassinating Gregory VII. He had recourse to Cencio, the most ruffianly, the most execrable, and the most disloyal of the Roman barons, and, by means of gold and promises, he induced him to slay the Vicar of Jesus Christ. While he was celebrating the midnight Mass on Christmas Eve at the crib of the Saviour, Cencio secretly recruited his forces in Lucania, in La Pouille, and at Rome, with men as execrable as himself, who did not fail to be at their post at the appointed hour. The Pontiff had just finished giving Communion to the faithful, and the people were absorbed in solemn adoration, when suddenly the assassins rushed into the basilica, massacred all the assistants, tore down, with horrible oaths, the railing of the Papal chapel, slew several prelates, threw themselves like lions upon the Pontiff, and dragged him by the hair down the altar-steps. There they kicked him and struck him with their fists, while the cruel Cencio struck him with his sword in the forehead. Then they tore off him the pontifical decorations, loaded him with chains, and dragged him to Cencio's castle, to deliver him alive to Henry.

The report of this attempt soon spread throughout the city. Beside themselves with anger, the Romans sounded the tocsin, armed themselves with torches, and rushed through the streets, crying:

"Death to the enemies of God and Rome! Set the Pope at liberty! Gregory for ever!"

The people forced their way into the dwellings of Cencio's friends, sacked and burned them; they entered every tower, thinking to find Gregory. Suddenly a voice was heard above the crowd:

"Gregory is in Cencio's castle!"

At dawn hundreds of Romans surrounded the palace of the traitor, assailing it with battering-rams. Scaling-ladders were applied to the windows of the tower, a large breach was opened, and the people rushed into and entered the castle to deliver Gregory.

The perfidious Cencio, seeing himself reduced to the last extremity and overcome by the fear of death, followed closely on the footsteps of the Pontiff, threw himself on the ground, embraced his feet, and, weeping, implored him to pardon his crime and protect him against the fury of the people. Gregory received him kindly with open arms, pardoned him with paternal charity, and at once hastened to a window of the castle. He opened it, and exhorted the Romans to be calm and to return to their homes. But the enthusiastic multitude rushed into the castle and carried Gregory in triumph first to the Capitol, then to the basilica, to celebrate the Divine mysteries.

Cencio, who owed his life to the heroism and magnanimous charity of Gregory, received for his penance to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Ungrateful and treacherous, he took refuge, on the contrary, at the Court of the Emperor Henry, there to continue the commission of new crimes against his saviour. Gilbert, as cruel and as perverse as he, seeing the failure of his evil designs, took refuge in Lombardy, where, supported by Theobald of Milan and other dissolute lords, he stirred up dissension and raised a fearful war against the Church.*

These events again completely convulsed the whole of Germany, whose troops made a descent on Italy through the valleys of the Eizack, to sustain the movement of the Lombards. Therefore, on their arrival at Trent, Theobald and Yoland found the town filled with soldiers, who were on their way to Verona through the valley of Lagarino. The prudent young girl, despite her disguise and the protection of the wise and pious pilgrim, feared to risk falling into the hands of the soldiers. After having honored the relics of Saint Vigilo, patron of the town of Trent, she said to Theobald that she would renounce her intention of accompanying him to Saint Peter of the Woods, for fear of being molested on the banks of the Adige by the troops who guarded the gorges of the Alps.

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* Paul Bernried, chapters 54, 55. Lambert, in the year 1076. Adam Brem., "Histoire Ecclésiastique," vol. iii. Voigt, "Histoire de Grégoire VII."

"I think it more prudent," added she, "to go into Italy by the valley of Brenta, where the passage is safe and easy."

Theobald parted with regret from his dear and amiable companion. He called down on him the blessing of Heaven, and started very early in the morning towards Caliano, while Yoland went in the direction of the strong Castle of Pergen.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SOLITARY OF THE LAKE.

THE road which leads from Trent to the Castle of Pergen was far from being as smooth and convenient in the time of Yoland as it is at present. It is but recently that those openings, which now astonish the traveller, amazed at sight of these huge boulders, forced from their places by the iron and the mine, have been hewn in the sides of the mountains which overlook the river Fersino. Before him stretches a broad road, which sometimes passes under gigantic masses of rocks, suspended over his head like the arches of a bridge cast in empty space. But at the period when our story opens all this did not exist. In place of travelling along a smooth, level road, the way lay between deep and abrupt fissures, scarcely giving passage to foxes and goats ; and often the road was rendered impassable by portions of crumbling rocks. Travellers were constantly forced to keep the crest of the mountains, continually going up or coming down, according to the windings, by little, narrow, slanting, and tortuous paths, obstructed by brambles and brushwood. The journey, which was long and painful for foot passengers, was still more so for horsemen. In some places the path lay along the steep sides of the mountain and up high rocks, bordered on one side by enormous walls of granite, and on the other interspersed with fathomless abysses, in the depths of which was heard the distant roar of the waters of a torrent.

Yoland, still disguised as a pilgrim, passed out of the gates of Trent, and at length arrived, after much fatigue, about noon, at a large fissure, over which hung a very high bridge. The valley, which was extremely low at this spot, was enclosed between two mountains whose rugged heights here joined; and as the stream could not pass through them, its fury was concentrated at this point to such a degree that it had succeeded, by dashing against the stone, in wearing away the masses of granite, thereby making for itself a narrow passage. The high bridge rested above this abyss, and in the lofty parapets windows had been made which permitted the passers-by to contemplate its terrible grandeur. In the valley reigns perpetual darkness, the water of the torrent is black, and its foam always of a dark color. A black spray arises from it, and the cold, damp vapors add to the spectator's awe. Looking through one of the openings in the opposite parapet, the waters are seen dashing with impetuous rage and rushing from abyss to abyss. They eddy and whirl and roar and thunder like the tempest, striking terror into the soul.

Yoland, in spite of her fatigue, could not refrain, before sitting down, from contemplating these fearful rocks, for the terrible has its own attractions.

She perceived some doves skimming gaily through the air, but, coming over the frightful gulf, they flew hurriedly away. The hawk made great circles to fly hence more quickly. The young girl took out her wallet, and was about taking from it a piece of bread. Just then she heard the sound of hurried footsteps, and from the forest which skirted the extremity of the bridge she saw advancing four stern-faced men, who seemed full of anger. They were dragging towards the bridge a woman pale and dishevelled, with eyes full of terror and despair. Having reached the head of the bridge, she began to tremble and cry, raising her clasped hands to heaven, and asking for mercy in a voice choked with fear.

"No! no mercy for thee," replied the men, "O cruel woman, or rather hell-fury! . . . It would be a crime to pardon thee! Thou didst murder thy husband and children. . . . Aye, and thou shalt be torn by the rocks, engulfed in the roaring waters of the torrent, which are like to the rage which thy unnatural heart excites in us!"

And at the same moment they raised the poor woman and poised her on the parapet. At this sight Yoland arose, and, running towards the men, she cried:

"Stop! and if ye are Christians, ye will not let her die without making an act of contrition, that she may, at the judgment-seat of God, implore the mercy of Jesus Christ!"

In that age of faith, men even the most cruel stopped with respect at the name of Jesus Christ, and before putting any one to death they left him time to recommend his soul to God, and ask of the Divine Justice the pardon of his sins. At the commanding voice of Yoland, whom they took for a pilgrim, they stopped, and replied:

"Good youth, let the wretch then ask for pardon of Christ for her crime, but let her not hope to escape death. As thou seest, she is still in the flower of youth, but her heart is as hideous and vile as her features are sweet and lovely. Married to a brave young man, she at first left him to lead a life of guilt; then, one day, seizing the opportunity when her husband was asleep in the forest, she split his skull with a hatchet. She had two little children, one five years old, and the other three; this fury set fire to the thatched roof of her dwelling, locked the door, and the children were burned alive. But the devil urged her to the crime without giving her the means of concealing it. God permitted that, after having killed her husband, she threw the axe into a bush. Now, whilst she was feigning to mourn and lament over the murder of her husband and the loss of her children, in order to conceal her crime, a shepherd, cutting hay for his goats, found the bloody hatchet. It was recognized as belonging to this wretch, who was at once arrested, judged, and condemned by the magistrate to be thrown from the high bridge."

Then, addressing the woman, who was beating her breast and asking pardon of God, one of the executioners said:

"Make haste, and arise!"

"Let me," answered she, "make my confession to this young pilgrim, that Jesus may pardon me."

And, kneeling before Yoland, she avowed her crime.

Then one of the executioners took a handful of earth and put it in her mouth, as a symbol of the Viaticum, and immediately raising her, with his companions, they cast her into the depth below. She fell into the deep gorge, rolled into the torrent, struggled for an instant, and disappeared.

It was a superstitious belief of those rude and barbarous times that if, at the article of death, a man had no priest near to absolve him, he could not obtain pardon of God without confessing his faults to some person present. This belief was principally founded on the words of the Holy Ghost: "Humble thyself, confess thy sins, and thou shalt obtain mercy. . . ." To this may be added the custom, still in use at this period, of confessing, as they knelt under the penitent's porch, to the crowd who came to Mass, certain great crimes, the avowal of which was calculated to inspire in the others a salutary fear and shorten the duration of the canonical penance. In their childlike and pious simplicity, our ancestors believed that a confession made at the hour of death—even though it were to a person who had not received holy orders—would obtain for them absolution and the remission of their sins. So deeply was engraved on the hearts of the faithful the dogma of Confession, which in our days is denied by Protestants and turned into ridicule by unbelievers.

As to the strange custom of giving communion to the dying, by filling their mouth with earth, when they could not receive the sacred Body of Jesus Christ, we are inclined to believe that the earth was a symbol of the humanity which the Incarnate Word took upon himself. For, in truth, when he took upon himself a mortal body, formed by God out of the slime of the earth, Jesus Christ, like unto man, made himself earth.* It may be, too, that this custom dates back to the pilgrims of the Holy Land, who, dying in the desert by the darts of the Arab hordes, took as a viaticum some of this earth watered by the blood of Jesus Christ. This custom was most in use among soldiers dying in war, those condemned to death, or persons assailed in travelling by robbers.

Yoland had not the heart to raise her eyes and see the fall of this unfortunate woman; but, whilst the executioners were throwing her into the abyss, she threw herself on her knees and implored the mercy of God in behalf of that soul, for whom she also recited the Prayers for the Dead. She ceased not to intercede for the hapless woman until her arrival at Pergen. It was a trading town, the centre of the commerce of these rich valleys. The town lay at the foot of a fort, which stood on the summit of an immense rock, and which exists at the present day almost entire. In its triple enclosure of crenelated walls, flanked by high towers, rose the palace of the ancient lords. It rears its head majestically over the crest of a high peak, and its picturesque outline, bristling with turrets and spires, strikes from afar the eye of the traveller who follows the road to Levico.

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* Formavit Dominus Deus hominem de limo terræ (Gen. chap. ii.) And the Lord God made man of the slime of the earth.

The daughter of Pandolph did not stop. She avoided as much as possible remaining in the fortified towns, and preferred to proceed through villages and open towns, where the roads were freer and surprises less frequent. In fact, none of the roads were safe at this period. A number of petty tyrants, cruel and rapacious lords, imposed tolls, taxes, and many other exactions on travellers, often in more danger within their hands than amongst thieves. The young girl renewed her provisions at an inn situated outside the city, rested a little in the shade on the highway, and went on towards the Lake of Levico.

This valley, covered on both sides with thick woods, is now a quiet and sylvan spot. In the time of Yoland, the way through it was by a stony and rugged path, broken by ravines and precipices, which made it even to foot-passengers a very difficult passage. But at some distance the valley became forked. A wooded mountain, whose opposite declivities sloped downwards into two limpid lakes —that of Caldonazzo on the right, and that of Levico on the left—divided it into two parts. Yoland turned towards the town of Valsugana, passing along by the Lake of Levico, whose waters, as clear as crystal, flowed in among the windings of the mountain and formed delightful little gulfs, wherein swam and sported water-fowl, swans, and ducks, with green or varying plumage. This deep lake was shoreless. The slopes of the two mountains descended vertically to its edge, and were covered, on either side, by gnarled oaks, whose trunks, leaning over the abyss, were mirrored in its wave. This vast mirror reflected their leaf-covered summits, and borrowed from them a verdant and sombre tint, which, extending from one bank to the other, gave the whole lake the appearance of an immense meadow covered with soft and glistening grass.

The beauty of this spot fills the soul with a gentle melancholy. The silence which reigns there is disturbed only by the gentle murmur of the water, stirred by the wind in the depths of the valley. These regions inspire a sort of religious respect. Everything there awakens noble thoughts, which elevate the mind to the contemplation of heavenly things.

In the midst of the barbaric customs, the fret and turmoil of opposing parties, and urged by the general need of rest, many men of the eleventh century—after having passed their brilliant youth at the courts of kings, in war, amid the luxury of high stations and of human greatness, their hearts full of a faith which the passions could not quench—returned into solitude, and lived far from all communication with the world and the remembrance of the people. These rugged mountains, whose sloping declivities overhung the lakes, served as a retreat for three or four solitaries who had here built their cabins of leaves. They lived in abstinence, feeding themselves on the fish which they caught in the tranquil waters.

After having passed the night in a deserted hut, midway between Pergen and Levico, Yoland reached these heights about midday. Overcome by heat and fatigue, she seated herself under an ancient oak, to take her frugal repast. Scarcely had she opened her wallet, than she thought she heard sounds under the bank, which was thickly covered with alders and hazel trees. Fearing that robbers might be concealed in the neighborhood, she covered her face with her hood, which she had thrown back to enjoy the freshness of a gentle breeze just stirring the foliage ; then she arose cautiously, and with the end of her stick parted the branches of the trees. Near the edge of the lake was a little lawn watered by a clear stream, whose waters, on a level with the turf-covered bank, flowed into the lake with a gentle murmur. Two tall pine-trees shaded this charming oasis, and on rustic seats, which rested against their trunks, sat two men of respectable appearance. One was old, with long snow-white hair encircling his face ; the other seemed still in the vigor of manhood.

He was relating to the old man how he had received, the evening previous, a visit from one of the officials of Pergen, who had told him of Cencio's attempt to assassinate Hildebrand.

"It was at the instigation of Gilbert of Ravenna that this crime was perpetrated," continued he in a low voice. "But more than this, Henry, who regards Hildebrand as the usurper of the Holy See, because he ascended the throne without his consent, has just been excommunicated with singular audacity by this same Hildebrand, on the pretext that he had given investitures to archbishops, bishops, and abbots only by the power conferred on him by the imperial crown."

"Ariolfo," said the old man in a grave, calm voice, "thy visitor has repeated to thee as many falsehoods and calumnies as he has spoken words. In the first place, Gregory VII., and not Hildebrand, as thy provost calls him, is the Sovereign Pontiff, the direct successor of St. Peter, and that by the solemn declaration of Henry himself. To uphold the contrary, one must be ignorant and a schismatic. Thou knowest well that the Church of God was founded by Jesus Christ, whose Spouse she is; she is also our Mother, and consequently our Queen. The Holy Ghost formed her; he directs and enlightens her, and therefore is she the infallible guide of our ignorance. God gave her power, and, with her vigorous arm, she subdues hell and puts her enemies to flight. Hitherto, she has been invulnerable: the anger of pagan emperors, the fury of the barbarians, the perfidy of heretics, of sophists and false philosophers, and political craft, have alike been powerless against her. She has resisted and conquered in the past; she shall resist and conquer in the future. God said to Cephas: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. . . .' Dost thou believe, after this, that it requires human consent to elect and confirm the successors of Saint Peter and his vicars on earth?"

"Thou art right, Herman," replied Ariolfo; "but if the successors and vicars of Jesus Christ have themselves made it a rule that the pontiff elected should be confirmed by the Emperor, under pain of his election being made null, wherefore wouldst thou obstinately regard this Hildebrand as the lawful Pope when he refuses to ask the approbation of the Emperor?"

"Thou hast always been a soldier, my dear Ariolfo; therefore is thine ignorance excusable. Learn, then, that the Church of God on earth is militant; that is why God purifies her by struggles, and sometimes permits that her enemies oppress her for a time. Thus, about the middle of this century, Pope John XX. having just died, the tyrants of Rome wished, at any cost, to elect a Pope after their own hearts. But the clergy and people chose another; hence the Church saw Benedict IX. put forward by the Counts of Tusculum, and Sylvester III. seated in the chair of Peter and disputing with him the government of Christendom. To nip the schism in the bud, the two candidates were deposed, and a third was elected, who was to take the name of Gregory VI. But the two others seized upon the tiara, and the Church of Christ was in a state of great turmoil, when Henry III. came into Italy at the head of a strong army and marched upon Rome. He immediately expelled thence Benedict and Sylvester, and obliged Gregory, on his part, to renounce his pretensions to the Papacy. Henry chose and had elected Suidger, Bishop of Bamberg. He took the name of Clement II., and crowned Henry emperor. It was then that the Emperor made Clement promise, and the people swear, that they never would proceed to the election of a new pontiff without his express order.* Henry's intentions were good, for the times were troublous, and haughty and violent factions arose on every side. But it was an entirely personal privilege, and not to be transmitted by Henry to his successors.

"However, by virtue of the great axiom that personal favors are to be perpetuated by successors powerful enough to insist upon them, as soon as Henry III. had closed his eyes, and Stephen IX. and Nicholas II. had succeeded to Victor II. ; when Alexander II., of holy memory, had been raised to the pontifical throne and lawfully consecrated, the courtiers of the young Henry impeached Alexander in the name of the royal child, and declared his election null and void, as having not been made with the royal consent. Forthwith, they proclaimed the Anti-Pope Cadolaüs, who brought upon the whole West innumerable troubles and misfortunes. What do I say ? We should have seen that antichrist seated on the throne of Saint Peter but for the heroic Mathilda, the great Italian countess, who opposed to the fury of Cadolaüs the wisdom of her counsels and the strength of her armies.†

"Now, thou seest the gross perfidy of the enemies of Alexander. The promise of Clement II., entirely personal, to the Emperor Henry III., and faithfully respected by his successors, Damasus II., Leo IX., and Victor II., to whom Henry III., when dying, confided the guardianship of his son, then five years of age, was maliciously interpreted by the evil-minded courtiers, who wished to transmit it to the young Henry IV. Alexander II., the Vicar of Jesus Christ, would then be obliged to solicit from a woman and a child the authority to receive the Holy Ghost! What sayest thou to that?"

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* Baronius, Annals, 1046.

† Donizone and Fiorentini, "Life of the Countess Mathilda."

"What! of a woman?" interrupted Ariolfo, impetuously.

"Yes," answered Herman, "of a woman: the Empress Agnes, regent to Henry IV., who was still a child. . . . Besides, the promise of Clement had been made to the Emperor of the Romans, and not to the sovereign of Germany, and Henry was simply a king, as at present. The German princes none the less disturbed the bosom of the Church of God in naming an Anti-Pope, under pretence that Alexander had not asked permission to be Pope of a woman and a child. The poor Empress Agnes repented of her crime, and went to weep at the tomb of St. Peter in Rome, where she embraced the monastic life; but her son, become a man, persisted in his enmity to Alexander II., and continued to fight against Gregory VII., his successor. My dear Ariolfo, these ambitious desires, directed against the Pope, will not end with Henry; and, without being a prophet, I fear me much that the German nation—the most noble and generous in the world—will one day lose both the Pope and the faith, in punishment of its long and obstinate persistence in opposing the divine authority."

"According to that reckoning," said Ariolfo, "the Romans should long ago have lost the Pope, for they have so often shown themselves ungrateful traitors."

"Always with this difference," replied Herman, "that the Romans sin with an excess of vivacity of which they soon repent, while the German princes and prelates knowingly and with deliberate purpose despise the authority of the Sovereign Pontiffs. . . . They would arrogate to themselves, as it were, a divine right; but God will punish them by the most terrible of scourges if he permits them to become separated from his fold, in which alone abides salvation and eternal life."

"Thou saidst, a moment since," replied Ariolfo, "that Gregory asked the consent of Henry."

"I said so, and I will prove it, to show thee how perverse and impious is the war which the infamous Gilbert, with his train of libertines, vendors of benefices, adulators and flatterers of Henry, has declared against the illustrious Pontiff.

"A man of great judgment and noble heart, the monk Hildebrand long ago perceived that all the troubles arising in the Church were caused by the bondage in which she was held by the civil power. He conceived the sublime project of liberating the Church, which is a spiritual element, from all earthly servitude, of rendering her mistress of created things, because she is divine, and, as the repository of the keys of heaven and hell, to establish her the supreme judge, without appeal, of all Christians. The first point which was necessarily resolved upon was that the Pope be elected by the Roman Church, and not by the Emperor; that when the Church consecrated him, this consecration was valid, independent of the imperial sanction. Hildebrand spent a long time preparing for the realization of this sublime and heavenly project—first with Leo IX., then with Victor II. and Stephen IX., and at length with Nicholas II., who at the Lateran Council proclaimed this famous constitution: 'That the Sovereign Pontiff be elected only by the cardinals of the holy Roman Church, which suffrage shall include the clergy and people.'* These points being established, thou seest that Hildebrand was in the meantime elected to the pontifical chair by acclamation of the cardinals, clergy, and people, regarding him as the true and lawful Vicar of Jesus Christ, and, already governing the Church of God with full authority, deferred his consecration till he had obtained the sanction of Henry.

"In truth, the news of his election soon spread through Germany. Wicked men, who greatly dreaded this austere and incorruptible man, hastened to surround the king, openly censuring the arrogance and temerity of the Italians, who dared to elect a Pope without the king's consent. Henry, who trampled under foot all laws human and divine, was alarmed, and sent to Rome the Count

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*Labbe, "Councils," vol. ix. p. 100; Muratori, vol. ii. p. 2; Baronius, "Annals of the Year 1059."

Eberard, of Nellemburg, to ask the cardinals and people why they had chosen a Pope without the royal consent. In case the Count should acknowledge the irregularity of the assembly, he was to depose Pope Gregory, and immediately name another Pope. But on learning of the arrival of Count Eberard, the Holy Father received him with kindness and exquisite courtesy. He said to him very frankly: 'Tell thy king that he who reads the hearts of all is witness that I accept with regret, and with bitter tears, the decision of the clergy and the Roman people calling me to the sovereign pontificate. Furthermore, I besought and obtained permission from the cardinals to defer my consecration till I had received the approval of the Emperor, princes, and bishops of Germany. I shall not be consecrated, if I learn that King Henry approves not of my election.'

"Satisfied at finding such gentleness and submission in Gregory, Henry sent to Rome the Bishop of Verceil, Grand Chancellor of Italy, to be present at his elevation, which took place in the following year, on the Feast of the Purification. And let us here remark how men of God always act. Gregory knew that he was Pope, having no need of the sanction of Henry to make his election valid; he wrote to the kings, princes, and bishops, to encourage them, to reprove them, to advise them, watching thus over the interests of their souls and those of their subjects, as this is an obligation on him who governs the Church of Jesus Christ; nevertheless, he desired the approval of the King."

"But if Gregory considered himself the lawful Pope, independent of the Emperor," asked Ariolfo, "wherefore did he feign to await his sanction to be consecrated? It seems to me that this is hypocrisy and deceit unworthy of the greatness of Gregory."

"My dear Ariolfo, thou art wrong," replied Herman; "prudence is an essential element of greatness. Hildebrand had not lost sight of his design of liberating the Church so long held in bondage by the temporal power, but he wished to unloose and not to break the chains.

"Now, thou seest the scandal given by Gilbert, and with him the princes and bishops, avaricious and dissolute courtiers, who regard Gregory as an intruder, pretending that he was not named and elected by the King of Germany! . . . Thou shalt see that, by means of his intrigues and outcries, the infamous Gilbert, who burns to be Pope, will fall upon us one day like a bomb. But, God be praised! as long as Gregory draws the breath of life, Gilbert will be an Antichrist, and not Pope. Meanwhile, Western Christendom will remain in continual turmoil; and but that it shall behold, shining from the summit of Canossa, the luminous beacon of faith, it will know not how to direct its bark through the storm. There, happily, still glows the love of truth, there still beats a generous heart; and the invincible Mathilda, with her courageous army, has already defeated the evil designs of the Germans united against Pope Alexander.

"I repeat, Ariolfo, if the enemies of Jesus Christ attempt to invade Italy, to overthrow the throne of St. Peter, Mathilda will be there to oppose their efforts with the faith and courage of the noblest Italians. Therefore, as long as there remains an inch of the wall to entrench herself within, she will fight at the head of the brave Italians, and will come forth victorious from this most noble contest. Farewell, dear Ariolfo; it is now the hour of Sext; it is time for me to retire. Pray, my friend, pray; amid these terrible storms prayer is the anchor of the soul. Often recite this sublime psalm:

"'Why have the Gentiles raged and the people devised vain things?

"'The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together against the Lord and against his Christ.

"'Let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast away their yoke from us.

"'He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them.'

"Yea, God shall make naught of their plots, their intrigues, their terrors, and their deception; and he shall mock and laugh at them, and shall show the foolhardiness of those who are dashing their brows against that rock on which the strongest heads have been shattered from Nero and Attila to Didier."

The two solitaries separated after this interview, Ariolfo dwelling in the forest which lies near Pergeno, and Herman in that which borders on Levico. Yoland had felt great joy in hearing them. This conversation, which threw such a light on the validity of Gregory's election, caused her inwardly to thank God. But it made a melancholy impression on her to hear Herman augur so badly for Germany, which he already saw stricken by innumerable evils, in punishment of its past and present rebellions against the divine authority of the Supreme Pontiffs of the Church, of which God is very jealous. She then arose, finished her interrupted repast, and advanced in the direction of Herman's hermitage. There she sat down at the foot of a tree, and resolved to take some repose to repair her strength. After a short sleep, she awoke, and, seeing the sun already slanting over the Lake of Caldonazzo, she resolved not to defer any longer the visit which she had determined to pay to Herman, in order to reach Levico before night.

On approaching this solitary dwelling, Yoland felt a holy awe ; her heart beat, for she dreaded to hear the hermit confirm the terrible decree which he had declared against her country. About a hundred paces from the cabin was a little cluster of myrtle-trees, in the midst of which a cross seemed to mark the entrance to the hermitage. She said a short prayer, and advanced with a light step towards the cell. Just as she reached the threshold, Herman arose, having finished his prayers. His face was radiant, his eyes moist, his features wore the imprint of a divine ecstasy. At sight of the old man, still glowing with a celestial light, Yoland timidly lowered her eyes without daring to advance.

"Approach, virgin of Groningen," said the old man in a solemn voice—"approach and hear me. Jesus Christ has spoken. He cannot deceive; he speaks not falsely. He has promised the infallibility of his Church, and that Church cannot be overcome. Faith is the most precious gift that God can give to nations. It is by faith that they enter the divine fold and participate in the fruits of the Redemption, the infinite price of his blood, in the grace of the sacraments, in the light of the Holy Spirit, and in eternal life. But the gift of faith, which is incorruptible in the Church governed by the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, has not been always assured to the kingdoms and nations. In his mercy God pardons them many sins, but he chastises them still more in his justice. Oftentimes, in the inscrutable counsels of his wisdom, he punishes kings for the crimes of the people, and strikes the people because of the crimes of kings. . . .

"O house of Franconia! O house of Hohenstauffen! thy crown is a crown of blood, a crown of troubles and calamities! O Henry IV.! vaunt not of thy victories over the Saxons and Thuringians! Boast not that thou hast crushed Rodolph, thy rival; that thou dost beheld Germany trembling at thy feet and the Church in disorder because thou hast sold the blood of Christ to the most covetous and dissolute. Take not glory to thyself because thou hast triumphantly paraded thine Anti-Pope throughout Italy, enkindled a destructive flame at the Vatican, and beheld the holy victim of thy fury dying in exile at Salerno! Tremble!

for at the moment when the laurels of thy triumph shall seem in all their splendor, thou shalt suddenly behold them wither on thy brow and fall beneath thy feet. . . . Gregory shall shine like a star among the elect of God in heaven ; but thou. . . . Sorrow will crush thy heart, for thy son shall rebel against thee ; thou shalt be loaded with the curses of a people whom thou hast oppressed. Cast out from the bosom of that Church which has been the victim of thy cruel and sacrilegious fury, miserable, despised, consumed by remorse, thou shalt die the death of the sinner, without shedding one tear of repentance !

"Thy children's children shall inherit thy crime, and I already behold the Hohenstauffens seize in their turn the dagger with which thou piercest the bosom of the Church, to plunge it once more into the heart of that holy mother, who weeps, chastises, and pardons ! But she shall arise more vigorous after being stricken ; she shall come forth purer, more brilliant, from the bath of blood and the river of tears. Meanwhile, the most flourishing countries of Germany, the noblest and most generous portion of the flock of Jesus Christ, shall withdraw themselves from the blessed fold, led away by her princes and pastors ! Expelled from the healthful pastures and the living streams which gush from the pure bosom of the Church, she will wander among poisonous weeds and the troubled waters of error.

"The holy monasteries, the asylums of the first apostles of Germany, the most gorgeous basilicas, wherein resound day and night the praises of the Lord, the majestic cathedrals, the ancient sees of bishops, are sacked, profaned, burned, and overthrown, leaving only heaps of smoking ruins, mournful monuments of sacrilegious rage.

"Virgin of Groningen, wherefore growest thou pale? Wherefore dost thou tremble and gaze upon me in terror? Console thyself in the midst of calamities; for if Henry of Franconia and the Frederics of Hohenstauffen shall have drawn down on the German nation the just wrath of Heaven because of the long and bloody wars which they have waged against the Church, the house of Hapsburg shall arise, youthful, intrepid, and vigorous, to oppose itself like a wall of brass, like an impassable dike, to the haughty and swollen torrent of heresy which threatens to root out and extirpate the faith from every heart. Ferdinand of the Valiant Heart shall be the invincible rampart against which shall dash the impotent effort of the enemies of the Church; he shall save from this furious cataract a vast and noble portion of Germany."

The inspired hermit of Levico ceased for an instant, closed his eyes, and remained absorbed in profound meditation. At length, raising his moist and suppliant eyes to heaven, he continued:

"I see an emperor of the august house of Hapsburg denying the faith of his fathers. The times are evil for the Church. A hideous serpent soils with his poisonous slime a great number of the Catholic thrones of the West. . . . A noble off-spring of the Hapsburgs imbibes this venom, steeps his pen therein, and writes laws, each one of which fetters the Church, and, from a mother and a queen, seeks to make of her a slave. The Church, enlightened by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, is subjected, like a silly and unreasoning pupil, to the direction of the secular power. The divine laws have no power, unless earthly authority says to them: 'Pass on; I admit thee!' Bishops, clergy, doctrines, exterior worship, pious institutions of Christian charity, even sacraments, are bound by a thousand fetters; the Church is refused the free and universal government of her children; she is made as a stranger, a step-mother. O good and merciful God! wherefore dost thou permit it? Seventy years have already passed; a cruel and sacrilegious yoke weighs upon the august head of thy spouse! She walks bowed and humiliated before the eyes of her children. Behold the bloody wounds with which her heart is transpierced; behold her torn robe, her royal mantle, trailing in the dust!"

At these sorrowful words Yoland felt her heart oppressed by bitter sorrow. She fixedly regarded the prophet without making the slightest movement. All at once Herman's face softened, his eyes shone with a gentler light, an ineffable smile parted his lips, and he cried out in a transport of joy:

"O my Lord, so good and so full of love, thanks be to thee! The tears of thy saints on earth have filled the chalice of thy justice; their prayers have mounted to thy throne like the odor of incense; they have touched thy heart, and thou hast at length taken pity on the long and cruel sufferings of thy spouse! Yes, here is the young knight of Hapsburg! His valiant arms gleam on the plains of Italy. . . . I see him, his brow still girded with the laurels which he has gathered on the Adige and the Mincio; he ascends with a firm step to the throne of his ancestors, and thence he surveys with a confident glance the vast empire which surrounds him. I behold him, humble and pious, place his laurels at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin, who gave strength to his arm, valor to his heart, judgment and right to his genius. He contemplates with filial regard the Church, his divine mother; he sees her plunged in mourning and tears, bending beneath the yoke, irons on her hands and feet. At this spectacle the young prince trembles with indignation, and, addressing himself to her who regards him with hope and love, he says: 'Arise, my mother, arise and reign in my empire, free and the mistress of thy children; to thee I swear, in presence of God and men, to be ever the most docile and respectful of children!' He speaks thus, bends before her, breaks her irons, and kisses her feet; he loosens her chains, and, lovingly taking her hand, he lays it on his heart, saying: 'Feel, O my mother! how my heart beats with love and respect for thee! That unchanging heart shall know how to resist the fury of thy enemies, the snares of deceit, the envy which gnaws and consumes itself, the intrigues of heresy, the baseness of the wicked, who think themselves great and wise because by their sophisms and lies they rivet every day more firmly a new link in thy chains.' Then, removing the yoke which weighs on the neck of the Church: 'Raise thy head, O Queen of Heaven, O immaculate spouse of Christ, mistress and sovereign of the Christian world! resume thy diadem of gold, wherein shine the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thy bishops surround thee; confide to their care once more the heavenly treasure of thy doctrine, in the universities, seminaries, schools, and books! . . . Command, and we shall obey; guide, and we shall follow; counsel, and we shall not stray from the path of duty!'"

The venerable Prophet of the Lake spoke under the influence of an ecstasy which seemed to raise him above the earth; his face shone with unspeakable joy. One would have thought him one of the elect of God come down from Paradise. Yoland could not bear the supernatural brightness of the holy old man, and lowered her eyes. Then the hermit, coming to himself, perceived the young girl's respectful fear.

"Raise thine eyes," said he, "and console thyself by the thought that nothing can happen in this world without the permission of the divine wisdom. God disposes all things for the trial and triumph of his Church, for the salvation of the faithful, for the glory of his name. Yoland, thou who shalt one day become my niece, thou shalt not go to the tomb of Saint Peter, but thou shalt embrace the feet of his successor with that great princess who is unequalled on the earth for valor, nobility, and piety. When thou seest her, salute her on the part of Herman of Thuringia. Go, my daughter, depart with the benediction of Heaven ; for it grows late. On arriving to-morrow at the town of Valsugana, find the venerable Prunn, bailiff of the two castles, and tell him that Herman awaits him at his hermitage to make to him an important communication. . . . Farewell !"

Yoland would have wished to ask him a thousand questions ; but she was silent through respect, and retired, her soul filled with the future events which the hermit had announced to her. She passed the night at Levico, and at daybreak followed the course of the Brenta, in the direction of Borgo.

The delightful valley of Borgo slopes towards Italy ; it is watered here and there by the river and the large streams which everywhere intersect it. The cool, clear waters bring with them fertility and life. Here, enclosed in canals, they set in motion machines which enrich industry and commerce ; there, they meander through meadows, watering orchards, beautifying gardens, and purifying the air from the icy vapors which come from the lofty, snow-covered summits of the neighboring mountains.

At the entrance to the town, on two steep rocks, stand two ancient castles, whose airy outlines are traced against the azure of heaven, and give to the depths of the valley a grand and majestic aspect. These fortresses were built in the olden times to protect the valley against the incursions of enemies. The mountains which extend east and south offer the most delightful prospect which can be imagined. Their declivities are covered with orchards, vineyards, fields, and meadows, all extending from steep to steep to the highest crests. It is an enchanting picture, where richness of coloring combines with picturesque wildness. Clusters of fruit-trees, apple-trees, peach, plum, and pear trees, and the golden vineyards, succeeding each other from top to bottom, make the mountain like an immense forest. Perhaps there is not, in all the Italian Tyrol, a more beautiful and attractive spot than this. Villas, castles, cottages, brighten the whole neighborhood, their white fronts peeping through the tender verdure of almond-trees, chestnut-trees, and vines. On the other side of Borgo arises the mountain of Sella, covered with forests and pastures. Many lords there possess rural dwellings, whither they come to enjoy the delight of the fine season; and, in fact, pleasant walks and unrestrained interchange of thought have a special charm beneath these shades, by the banks of living streams which, gushing from the rocks, glide like silver threads through the meadows. Let us add that the people of the country have lively, intelligent, and cultivated minds, which render association with them most agreeable, whilst they show to their friends the most cordial hospitality, accompanied by the most varied and delightful amusements.

Such is the Borgo of to-day. But in the time of

Yoland there were only stern and frowning castles, fortified with bastions, flanked with crenelated towers, and bristling with turrets. The valley, so fertile and smiling now, was then muddy and covered with briers. From the crest of the mountains the thick clusters of oaks which crowned their wild summits cast afar a deep shadow.

Yoland was cordially welcomed by old Prunn, who dwelt in a manor whose front was mirrored in a branch of the Brenta. It was surrounded by a little garden, enclosed by arbors covered with excellent grapes. Baskets of flowers, and a trellis-work covered with creeping plants, added to the graceful aspect of the place. In this enclosure the young damsels of Prunn, so beautiful and distinguished, and no less remarkable for their virtues than for their wit and beauty, were wont to take their recreation. Yoland spent two days with this amiable family, still retaining her pilgrim's garb; then she set out for Italy across the formidable gorges of Grigno and Primolano.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATHS OF ALBANO.

THE Benedictine Convent of Praglia was founded about the year 1080 by Mautravers, one of the Counts of Montebello, between Mounts Euganean and Arco. It was afterwards enlarged, and became more celebrated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is one of the ancient monuments of the piety and religion of our fathers, which the Italians and foreigners who frequent the Baths of Albano never fail to visit, and each time the tourist finds therein a new subject for admiration. The vast edifice, the majestic arches, the four great cloisters, the lawns which surround it, the vastness of the halls used for the public assemblies of the monks, for exercises of piety, the innumerable cells wherein they retired to holy solitude, the magnificence of the corridors, the grandeur of the church, the bold and lofty domes and arches, all invite the soul to awe and recollection. Within these ancient walls, in these long aisles, silence, harmony, peace, and rest have made their abode. In this pious retreat, so fitted for contemplation, study, the midnight chant, prayer ascended unceasingly to God to appease his wrath and draw down the treasures of his mercy on a world stained by error, falsehood, ignorance, deceit—in a word, all the evils of human misery.

Passing beneath these solemn arches, traversing the long aisles, walking in the hanging gardens, descending into the vast cellars upheld by long rows of pillars through which narrow windows admit a dim light; beholding the marble vats where each monk was wont to come and wash his robe of serge; viewing these sombre chapels, adorned with antique pictures; breathing the air of this pious hermitage, where the holy monks lived far from the turmoil of vain desires, the soul feels itself elevated to feelings worthy of the nobility of its nature and the sublime end for which it was created.

There reigned ever sanctity united to benevolence; retirement rendered beautiful by hospitality; wealth which was a benediction to the laborer and pilgrim. Indeed, a broad and generous munificence unceasingly distributed alms amongst the poor, consoled widows and orphans, tenderly cared for old age, protected the innocence of virgins, and dispelled the evils attendant on public calamities. There, too, the noble crusader, at the head of his followers, going forth into Palestine to reconquer the Holy Sepulchre; the pious matron making a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles; the German, Suabian, or Danish lord coming, followed by his warriors, to defend the Holy See against the tyrant who outraged it, received, with their men and horses, the most cordial and courteous welcome. Every day hundreds of poor people flocked round the monastery gates, and received from the monks an abundance of all that was necessary for their sustenance. One is astonished at sight of the immense granaries, wherein lay the heaps of grain reaped by the vassals on the vast possessions of the monastery, and destined to furnish bread to the crowds who came thither from all parts of the country. But one is still more amazed at the stores, kitchens, fruit-trees, meat-shops, oil-mills, and workshops of all kinds where the monks worked with the laborers. Here are apartments for pilgrims, the guest-house for travellers, stables, hay-lofts, garrets. Those vast cellars wherein they stored the vintage ; the vats for the wort, as large as cisterns ; the arbors for preserving the grapes in clusters ; the presses, with their tubs and vats, can give some idea of the enormous quantity of wine distributed at the monastery every day.

Our century, wearied in the pursuit of an artificial civilization, cannot understand the grandeur of those ancient times, when faith and generosity were, so to say, innate. It deplores the amount of riches swallowed up in monasteries ; it cries out against their extravagance. But whilst pretending to speak in favor of the people, it will not admit that the wealth of the monk was for the people a benevolent resource, so much the more precious that they might have recourse to it without shame and as though it were their own. At the present day, these immense possessions are nearly all in the hands of wealthy proprietors, who, after having taken this revenue from the poor, squander it in vain luxury, in feasting, in display, and often in debauchery.

Yoland journeyed into Italy along the verdant shores of the Brenta. She passed through Bassano and Padua, to continue her pilgrimage in the direction of the Po, keeping beside its right bank. Leaving Padua, she entered the Euganean gorges, then all covered with forests of oak, firs, and larches. One day she arrived, about noon, between the hill of Tramonte and the meadows which surround the bastions of the gloomy Castle of Berenger, enclosed by a double moat. The young girl, who made it a rule always to avoid drawbridges, took care not to approach the manor. She looked around her, seeking some rural abode where she might rest. She perceived a tolerably large farm, which appeared to be the dwelling of some peasant in easy circumstances. Some little children were playing on the threshold, and in the house she could soon perceive a pretty young girl, tall, rosy, and strong, who was busy combing with filial care the snow-white hair of a venerable woman. This was the young girl's grandmother. The grand-daughter was collecting the scattered locks which remained on the old woman's head, and fastening them in a knot. The old woman was more than one hundred and four years old, but age had neither destroyed her sight nor her hearing; her teeth were strong and whole, acquitting themselves wonderfully of their office. Tall and straight, with figure and head erect, one would have taken her for a woman of fifty, had not innumerable wrinkles appeared on her cheeks and brow. Her limbs were a little stiff, and she could walk but slowly, leaning on a stick. Soon she arose from the stool on which she was seated, and, addressing the young girl, she said :

"My dear Justine, I thank thee ! God will reward thee for thy kindness to thine old grandmother !"

Just then Yoland entered, clad in her pilgrim's dress, and the hood drawn over her face. She advanced modestly, and asked hospitality for the love of God.

"Thou art welcome," said the old woman ; "beneath Gilda's roof, my dear son, there is for all a cordial welcome. Enter and be seated. Our women have gone to carry the breakfast to the haymakers ; on their return they will serve us dinner. Meanwhile, Justine, bring forth bread, butter, and honey."

The young girl took from a closet what the good woman had desired, and placed it on a walnut table in the middle of the room. The venerable dame sat opposite Yoland, and looked into her very eyes.

"Ay !" said she, "but thou art young and frail, my dear child ! Whence comest thou, my son, and whither art thou going ?"

"I come from afar, good mother ; I vowed a pilgrimage to the tomb of the holy Apostles."

"Ay ! I went thither, too, in my youth, with my poor father," said old Gilda. "It was in the time of the Emperor Otho II. I saw and venerated the chains of St. Peter in the basilica of Eudoxia, thirty years after the great miracle performed through them on an esquire of Otho the Great. He was possessed by the devil, and the touch of those sacred chains forced him to depart from him. When thou art at Rome, good youth, kiss with respect the chains of the Prince of the Apostles, and thou shalt have naught to fear from magic, apparitions, phantoms, lost souls, or devils. Thou seest my hair is perfectly white, except near my forehead, where there is one lock as black as that of Justine. I will tell thee why. Engellon, my poor husband—may he rest in peace!—attributed it to the touch of those sacred chains. The same thing will happen to thee if thou placest them on thy head."

"Pray Heaven, good mother," replied Yoland, "that I may succeed in reaching Rome, where I shall devoutly kiss those holy relics, that, through the merits of St. Peter, I may obtain firmness in my faith, love and respect towards the Holy See, obedience to the Supreme Pastor of the Church, without which virtues I may not hope to attain eternal life."

The old woman loved to talk, and, once started, she stopped not on the road; she therefore quickly replied:

"I assure thee that since then I have never suffered from magic, nor enchantments, nor the attacks of the evil spirits. Is it not a great reward, a signal privilege, which many queens do not possess? My dear child, we dwell in a country which is very dangerous, very unsafe. . . Alas! one gate of hell opens among the Euganean Hills!"

"What sayest thou?" said Yoland. "Sin is the only gate of hell. . . . I have never heard that there was other means of entrance."

"Thou art still young, my son," continued the old woman. "Listen! Three miles from this mountain stands an eminence named Albano, because of a rock whence flows a great stream of boiling water. It forms a little lake as blue as indigo, and around this lake, through fissures in the earth, also gush forth great streams of boiling water. This lake and its sources fill the surrounding air with a suffocating odor of sulphur. A thick, black smoke comes thence, darkening the air. Our old men tell us that Cain, wandering on the earth, and ever pursued by the shade of Abel, came one day to this place. Overcome by fatigue and despair, he threw himself on the ground to sleep. But the earth opened and the fratricide fell into hell. He was a giant; and God sent up the Euganean Hills to fill the immense cavity which he made in his fall. A prey to cruel torture, Cain seized Lucifer and hoisted him on his shoulders; thence he shook the base of Mounts Albano and Ortona; he clung to them, and in his rage forced them upwards. . . . Sweat stood on all his limbs, and this sweat, impregnated with the sulphur and brimstone of hell, came through the flames which surrounded his enormous body. It oozed through the rock, flowed into the deep caverns formed by the clefts in the rocks, and rose into the air boiling and smoky. Hence, in these accursed waters no fish are found. Geese, ducks, nor water-fowl of any kind ever swim therein, and the thick vapor infests the air to such a degree as to cause death.

"But these boiling, hellish waters are not all. On the crest of the hills of Tramonte, of Torreglia, of Rovolone, and Carbonare, it is not uncommon to see the shade of Lamech scouring these countries in search of Cain, whom he has pursued for nearly six thousand years. This threatening spectre bears a bended bow, ready to draw it on the murderer of Abel. His whole body emits a thick smoke, which forms masses of cloud around him. When he calls Cain, his voice resounds like thunder through the valleys. Our mountaineers often behold this prodigy when the moon is near its full. When the giant Lamech comes near the side of Tramonte, the earth is heard to roar as in a bellows; it trembles and shakes the leaves of trees, which fall, wither, and are blown away by a whirlwind. Then Lamech thrusts the top of his head through the earth, and his hair, as stiff as a forest of lances, rustles with a noise like the shivering of the trees in the woods. The dogs howl, bulls roar, horses neigh, sheep bleat. . . . The spectre rises to his full height, and placing one foot on Mount Arco, and the other on that of Tramonte, he stands so high that his head and chest veil the light of the sun. . . ."

"Good dame," interrupted Yoland, "hast thou ever beheld this spectre? It must be horrible; and as for me, I should die of fright!"

"I told thee already that my forehead was touched at Rome by the chains of St. Peter. Ay! and their sacred touch dispels all visions, and I could not see the spectre of Lamech. Learn also that the entire plain which surrounds the hot waters of Albano is haunted by the wandering souls of the Euganeans—ancient, yea, very ancient people, who came thither by sea, everywhere practising fearful cruelties. They died one after the other, and divine justice condemned each in succession to wander, till the day of the last judgment, in these regions; and they never cease by day or night. At the first stroke of midnight all these souls go to bathe and quench their thirst in the sulphurous waters of Albano, where they sigh and groan till the dawn of day. They are invisible; but if, by ill luck, they chance to touch some passing Christian, he falls from his horse, if he is riding, or, if on foot, he falls on the ground, and has but twenty-four hours to live. One day Baldo, my poor cousin (I now speak of a misfortune which happened eighty years ago, but I remember it as though it were yesterday), was returning about noon from Mount Ortona. He was covered with great drops of sweat, such had been his haste. Suddenly he felt a touch; his limbs failed, his lips grew parched, his tongue thickened, and, unable to speak, he uttered a stifled groan. Some woodcutters carried him home, and said to Engelarde: 'Poor woman, a spirit touched him; it is all over with Baldo.' The unhappy man died that night. But I fell there a hundred times in my youth; the shock of spirits could have no power over me, for I had been blessed by the chains of Saint Peter. When these souls are thirsty, they go into the huts and drink the water placed therein, emptying the troughs for the cattle, and even the cisterns. They enter the granaries, mix the beans with the wheat, the barley with the lentils, and the peas with the other grains. If the housewife is busy making bread, they prevent the dough from rising. And God preserve us if they cast their eyes on the children! They are at once seen to pine away and drop like grass in the meadow; their eyes roll upward, and they die in convulsions, or are covered with sores, which make them a pitiable sight. Some among them are malicious spirits, who amuse themselves by playing a thousand pranks. They lay pitfalls, pull away ladders, and throw down people. If one is in haste to return home, they stuff the key-hole; the key will not fit the lock, and one is obliged to call a locksmith to unfasten the door. They frighten horses, make mules tricky and so obstinate that they remain at the stable-door. In summer they turn themselves into flies or insects to torment us. Under the form of horse-flies they sting horses and drive bulls and heifers to fury. Often, too, changed into moles, they destroy the crops; into rats, they gnaw the nuts; as moths, they consume woollen cloth; as worms, they make holes in the tables; as insects, they destroy the fruits. In a word, they cause all the mischief they can, and no spell, no exorcism, no words, have any effect on them. Happily, the time is not far distant when these perverse souls must quit this country!"

"How dost thou make that out? I see no remedy."

"Pardon me, there is one, and this shall be soon applied by the baron of this domain, a man of great wealth and eminent piety—the Lord Mautravers, of the Counts of Montebello. He formed the design of founding, at the foot of that mountain, a temple dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and a monastery of the Order of Saint Benedict. He has already brought thither, from the celebrated Convent of Pollirone, Father Iselbert to make the preparations. If thou shouldst desire to see him this afternoon, he is to pass by here on his way to the neighborhood of Mount Arco, the destined site for the foundation of the abbey."

Yoland learned this news with great joy. She hoped that Iselbert would give her advice and directions for her pilgrimage; therefore she awaited him with impatience. The women were already beginning to return from the fields to light the fire and prepare the repast for the harvesters, who also came in, with their scythes on their shoulders.

It was nearly four o'clock. The family included three old men, the sons of Gilda, their seven sons, men of more than forty years of age, and each with his fine, strong boys, of whom several were already fathers of families, with wives, daughters, and children, making altogether thirty-seven people. As they entered, they put away their scythes, then bowed to their grandmother and wished her good-day with a truly filial affection. They were soon seated at table, the men on one side, the women on the other. In the place of honor Gilda was seated, and, as queen of the table, was served the first. The children occupied small separate tables. Two women brought the dishes intended for the grown persons, whilst two others served the children. In this numerous gathering reigned a touching order and agreement. The women lived together in excellent harmony, occupying themselves each in turn in the housekeeping. All of them were obedient to her who had charge of the week, assisted her, and noiselessly performed their task.

The young girls led the cows to the pasture, aided the hay-makers and reapers, gathered in the vintage, carried the baskets of grapes to the presses, and gathered the hay destined to feed the cattle during the winter. The smaller ones cared for the goats and sheep grazing in the plains or on the hills. The women busied themselves with the hemp and flax; they spun, and drew, and threaded linen during the winter evenings; others took care of the geese, hens, ducks, and of the eggs. All of them, in a word, lent a hand with the washing, with the housekeeping, prepared the lard to prevent it from becoming rancid, smoked the hams, made sausages and puddings, kneaded and baked the bread. This family was like a little state, where each one jealously preserved the old customs and traditions.

Yoland, on account of being a pilgrim, was placed at table between the two oldest members of the family, and was served after Gilda. The choicest bits were always offered her. At that period, a single glass was placed on the table, which was passed round from hand to hand. Yoland received it first: she drank to the health of her hosts, and passed it to her neighbor. At the end of dinner, the oldest, who had given thanks aloud, arose and said grace, to which all present answered amen, making the sign of the cross.

In the twinkling of an eye the children disappeared. Justine offered her arm to her grandmother, and led her to the arbor of foliage, which shaded the entrance to the garden, whilst two other young girls gathered up the remnants of the meal. They carried them to some poor persons who were waiting under the shade of an enormous tree whose tufted foliage overhung the door of the stable. Suddenly the curly-haired Nalda, one of the almsgivers, ran back to the house, rushing in like a whirlwind, dipped her fingers in a font, joined her hands, and, sprinkling her face with the holy water, threw it around the threshold of the door.

"What are thou doing, Nalda?" said Justine; "wherefore the holy water? What is the matter?"

Nalda placed her finger on her lips:

"Hush!" said she, "Baugulfa is with the poor. . . . Thou knowest she is a witch. . . . I came for a loaf of white bread, one of those marked with a cross, and I am going to bring it to her, that she may depart contented, otherwise she might do much evil to the children, or to our cousins."

With these words, she went to the cupboard, took a loaf, and brought it to the supposed witch. Nalda offered it to her with a smiling face.

"Here, good Baugulfa," said she, "take this white loaf for the love of us."

The poor woman looked joyfully at the young girl, and, kissing the cross marked on the bread, she said:

"Go with my blessing, fortunate child! God will reward thy charity. Charms and spells shall never cross the threshold of thy home."

Nalda came running to Justine, and related to her, smiling, the old woman's prediction.

"The white bread," said she, "will shelter the children from all spells. If Diomara and Gandolfa, our neighbors, had done likewise, they would not have had to mourn their son. In place of receiving Baugulfa kindly and regaling her with white bread, one let loose a great house-dog against her, the other refused her a little meal. It fared ill with them, for the witch turned towards the house, bit her fingers, clenched her fists, and muttered between her teeth some unintelligible curses. Two days after, Diomara's young son, a real flower, with his cheeks like roses and milk, as plump as butter, was seized with shivering and trembling in all his limbs. He lost his appetite and became poorly; his thin pale lips, his ashy color, and his hollow eyes, with circles round them as black as ink, announced his speedy death. As to the child of poor Gandolfa, he swelled like a leather sack, and became flabby and yellow; his cheeks grew soft and puffy; his gums became inflamed, his eyes languid and glassy. The poor mother called in Eriberte, that old woman who knows the secrets of all the plants, the virtues of minerals, the mysteries of antidotes. By just looking at a child, she can tell thee: he has worms, he has epilepsy, or he is badly fed. Now, Eriberte, on seeing Gandolfa's little one, said, immediately: "Charms are required here instead of the usual remedies." She dipped her fingers in the oil of St. Justine, made the sign of the cross in the pit of the child's stomach, and sprinkled its face with holy water. The most marvellous thing, dear cousin—the little creature at once began to wriggle like a snake, to foam at the mouth, and to utter a sort of horrible moaning. The neck of the child swelled, so that they feared for its life, but at length it opened its mouth, and there came forth dead rats, lizards, toads, balls of wool, forks, and pins. . . . Alas! into what a fearful condition these horrible witches can put a child! God guard us from the devil. . . . But it is our interest to treat Baugulfa well."

Whilst Nalda was relating these strange events, Father Iselbert came to the hut with an architect and workmen. They were on their way, as we have said, to visit Mount Arco, choosing the most desirable spot, the easiest ascent, with the coolest air, the most solid earth, and least likely to become undermined. When they had well examined the country and sounded several eminences to discover the nature of the substrata, they unanimously decided on the spot at present occupied by the celebrated monastery of Praglio, which, in the barbarous Latin of the times, was called Our Lady of Pratalea, undoubtedly because of the vast meadows by which it is surrounded.

Whilst the workmen were sounding the earth here and there, Father Iselbert left them to chat a little with Gilda, whom he found seated in the shady arbor.

"What tidings, good mother? I wish thee good-day. . . . Didst thou dine with a good appetite?"

"Never better," replied Gilda; "the stomach always works well, and if it make me not stout, it at least keeps me alive. It is not so with Justine, and all the children of the house, who are so fresh and hearty it is a pleasure to see them. The least morsel of bread improves them. Bless them, Father, that they may grow in wisdom and grace. . . ."

"And that they also may live a hundred years—is it not so?" interrupted the monk.

"Yes, yes, God be praised," replied Gilda, "I have reached my hundred and fourth year, and during the little time I have to live, I love to breathe the fresh air. I bethink me, Father, we received here this morning a pilgrim on his way to Rome. He is so young, so delicate, and of such gentle manners, one would call him a little saint. Wouldst thou receive him into thy company, and conduct him to Pollirone, whither he can continue his way."

"Most willingly, good dame. Brother Bernard must indeed remain here to superintend the work. His horse will serve for thy pilgrim. . . But where is he? Call him."

Justine went for Yoland. Her gracious and noble manner convinced Father Iselbert that he was a young man of good family. He said:

"My young friend, what is thy name?"

"Lando," replied the young girl.

"Well, wouldst thou come with me as far as the Convent of Pollirone?"

"Thankfully, Father," replied Yoland, bowing; "thou art doing me a great service."

"I shall be happy in so doing," said Iselbert. "Hold thyself in readiness to-morrow morning, at the door of the house, and I shall take thee with me as I pass, just at dawn."

They accordingly set out the following day. The monk, making Yoland ride beside him, questioned her as they rode along. Iselbert learned that she came from Moravia, and that she had traversed a great part of the German empire. He asked her for news of it.

Yoland replied with judgment and discretion, deploring the calamities and distress which the cruel wars of Henry against the Saxons and Thuringians had brought upon the country.

"Poor Germany!" said Iselbert, "thou dost inspire me with the liveliest compassion. Thou art the most noble, the most loyal, the most valiant of the Northern nations. Otho the Great, Eric the Saintly, and Henry the Black have raised thee to the apogee of power and glory. To-day, alas! their son oppresses and tramples thee under foot! Still, he seeks to force thy faith, of which no people is more jealous than thine. . . . He is not ashamed to make the most abominable traffic of the Church, basely selling episcopal sees, the dignities of abbots, priors, canons, the government of hospitals, in a word, everything that is holy on earth. O my child! notwithstanding such a crying abuse of holy things, think not that all ecclesiastics are thus covetous and avaricious. Forget not the weakness of man; when a violent temptation excites the evil desires of his corrupt nature, it is easy for him to sin. The world profits by this to cry out against the avarice and cupidity of the clergy, but it alone is truly covetous, is graspingly avaricious. In fact, it arrogates to itself a right which belongs not to it, which it cannot have but by violence and the abuse of its strength—that of stealing the goods of the Church and selling them to the first bidder. Thou knowest, the Church dispenses the grace of the Holy Ghost by her divine prerogatives, and she desires no payment for it. On the contrary, she condemns and anathematizes all priests who dare to receive such, and repeats what Simon Peter said to Simon Magus, who, seeing the Apostles giving the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands, offered them money, saying: 'Give me also this power.' 'But,' Peter answered with indignation, 'may thy money perish with thee; because thou hast esteemed the gift of God to be purchased with money.'* Now, the covetousness of some princes causes them, under pretext of fiefs, to assume the right of giving investitures of abbeys and bishoprics, and that for money. As soon as this door was opened to ambition, to pride, to the vilest passions, they crouched on the threshold of the sanctuary to seize upon the holiest and most august dignities. The princes have thus opened a broad and new way of enriching the public treasury with the blood of Jesus Christ, and Simon the Magician, excommunicated by Saint Peter, is received and feasted by Henry. He who has the most marks of gold or silver to offer him ascends with a confident step into the episcopal chair; he immediately possesses heavenly science, piety, zeal, temperance, meekness, in a word, the whole train of virtues which should render the bishop the guide and guardian of the fold of God. Alas! all these bishops, these grasping abbots, are ravenous wolves, and not pastors—masters of iniquity, and not of justice—intruders, and not Aarons chosen by God—antichrists, and not the anointed of the Lord. Pope Alexander II. combated this horrible monster to the day of his death, and Gregory VII. will have no rest till he has cut off its head and purified the Church from its poisoned breath. But Henry sustains this abominable hydra; he laughs at the anathemas of the Pontiff, and fills at once with maledictions and with gold coins his coffers, always empty, because of the cruel and unjust wars which he makes on his subjects. Gilbert, the standard-bearer of simony, promises Henry endless wonders if he raises him to the pontificate. Thou knowest the odious attempt on the life of the Holy Father on Christmas night. Gilbert wished to buy the See of St. Peter, at the price of sacks of gold, which soon would disappear in the bottomless coffers of the insatiable Henry. Is it very astonishing that Germany and Italy are in turmoil, and the schismatic clergy and princes everywhere fan the disturbance? But the great heart of Gregory overrules the storm. An unshaken rock, he resists the fury of the ocean, and sees without a quiver the foaming waves breaking at his feet and rebounding with tremendous force. For a thousand years the seas have roared around the Rock of Peter, and the more they lash its sides, the more it shines. Against this rock a hundred tyrants have broken their kingly pride, and whoever attempts to dash against it shall be shattered. If the unfortunate Henry persists in attacking this sharp stone, he will speedily break his head. This is my opinion, confirmed by all history. Nevertheless, I am filled with sorrow at sight of the oppression of the people, of the persecution which is endured by the orthodox bishops, faithful abbots, and generous princes, who remain devoted to the Holy Father Gregory. On one they impose heavy taxes; they torture others; here, some are degraded, removed from their sees; there, they are banished from the empire without refuge or asylum; if some monastery receives them, if some prince gives them an asylum, the King spares neither threats nor annoyance nor violence to punish them for this act of charity."

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* Acts, chap. viii.

Father Iselbert glanced at his companion. Just then, a great tear fell from under Yoland's hood.

The monk ceased speaking, checked his steed, and, seeing that the rest of the company were far behind, he said, in a low voice :

"Good youth, thou weepest ; hast thou to mourn a parent who is cruelly persecuted for his fidelity to the Pope ? Tell me, in all confidence, for I and our whole monastery of Pollirone acknowledge for lady and mistress the great Italian Countess, the pious and invincible Mathilda, whose ancestors founded and endowed this abbey. She also protects us, and honors us beyond all that can be imagined. This heroic woman is the defence of Italy, the consolation of the good, the bulwark of the Holy and Apostolic See. Pope Gregory calls her the eldest daughter of the Church, the powerful arm ever ready to defend it, the impenetrable shield against which the darts of the enemy are impotent. Mathilda alone knew how to resist with sublime courage the flattery, temptation, and open violence of so many princes, who make war on her because of her unswerving devotion to the lawful successor of Saint Peter. Protected as we are by Mathilda, we can openly show ourselves the devoted sons of Gregory. Tell me, therefore, if thou hast any grief ; speak with confidence, either to relieve thy heart, or that thou mayest obtain the advice and aid of the Countess, who will shortly visit the monastery. For this reason our reverend abbot recommended me to return as soon as possible to the abbey, to be present on her arrival."

Yoland heard with great joy that she should soon be in presence of the illustrious lady who was filling the world with her renown and was the hope of all just people. The Abbot Daufer and the Abbess Theotberga always spoke of her with the greatest veneration. They called her the preserver of the West, having so energetically defended, against the Anti-Pope Cadolaüs, the saintly Alexander II., as she was now defending as lawful the election of Gregory VII. and his sublime virtues. The young girl expressed her gratitude to Father Iselbert for his sympathy. Still continuing to pass for a man, she added that she wept every day for the long and painful exile in which her father was pining, the victim of his constant devotion to the cause of Alexander and that of Gregory.

"It is indeed to implore the divine mercy in favor of my father," said she, "that I am going on a pilgrimage to Rome."

Three days later they crossed the Po in a boat, and soon arrived at the monastery, where Father Iselbert presented the young pilgrim to the venerable abbot, adding that he was a virtuous young man worthy of his solicitude. The abbot confided Yoland to the Father-host, who led her to the guest-quarter. Two days after the arrival of Yoland, a little before sundown, a knight rode up to the door of the monastery, announcing that Mathilda was half a league from Pollirone. Then the abbot, accompanied by the oldest monks, went down in their habit and crossed the lowered drawbridge of the moat which lay within the enclosure. All the religious followed him, and ranged themselves to meet Mathilda at the foot of a stone cross which stood in the middle of a vast field. The retinue of the noble lady was preceded by one hundred knights, with helmets on their heads, and lances at their wrists. At some distance behind them came two trumpeters, followed by four axe-bearers. The Countess soon appeared, mounted on a superb white steed. She wore a large and long blue cloak, brocaded in flowers of gold; a hood of blue silk covered her head; her deerskin gloves, with deep cuffs, were fastened by buttons of filagree adorned with emeralds; on her feet she wore slippers of figured red morocco, ornamented with golden spurs and little diamonds.

Behind the Countess came, on her right hand, the holy Bishop Anselm; on her left, the grand seneschal, followed by the grand falconer, the master of the camp, esquires, pages-at-arms, and servants of high lineage. The march was closed by a battalion of knights, armed with swords, and covered with a very fine coat-of-mail with flowing sleeves. The abbot offered them holy water, and they all crossed themselves. Mathilda alighted in the second enclosure, and was led to the church, where she assisted at the singing of Compline, then, according to her custom, arose at midnight for Matins.

On the following day, after Tierce, when they had heard the community Mass, the abbot and Father Iselbert presented the young pilgrim to her, then retired, leaving them alone.

Mathilda was possessed of great beauty. Her face, extremely gracious, was full of a sweet and noble dignity, and her smile was of rare gentleness.

When she spoke to any one, the softness of her voice and the serenity of her glance never failed to inspire in her hearers an affectionate confidence. Yoland approached her. Mathilda regarded her with a piercing and scrutinizing glance, asking her a number of questions, to which the young girl answered with a judgment and reason which immediately gained for her the tenderness and sympathy of the Countess. Suddenly she interrupted the young pilgrim:

"Wherefore, my child," said she, "dost thou wear that hood drawn over thy face? I pray thee to cast it aside, as it is meet thou shouldst do before thy superior."

The timid child cast down her eyes, grew as red as a burning coal, and trembled with fear in every limb. She made a movement to lay aside her hood. Just then, her long beautiful hair, fastened at the top of her head, fell down over her shoulders. Mathilda smiled kindly, took her hand, and said:

"I already suspected that thou wert a young girl. Take courage, my child; God has led thee by his grace into a safe harbor. . . . Tell me now freely and frankly who thou art; thy speech has already shown me that thou hast been brought up in fidelity and respect towards the Vicar of Jesus Christ. . . . Thy face and manner convince me that thou art of noble origin."

Yoland briefly related her misfortunes to the Countess. She told her who her father was, and why, when she could not rejoin him in Bohemia, she had undertaken this long journey. She prayed her to keep her rank secret, for she feared King Henry and the enemies of her father.

"What!" cried Mathilda, "thou art the daughter of Count Pandolph of Groningen, whom I knew in my early youth at the court of my mother Beatrice! He was the noblest, most loyal knight at the court of the Emperor Henry III., who sent him more than once on a secret mission. My mother held him in high esteem, because of his valor and virtues, and I am but too happy in welcoming to my arms the daughter of that magnanimous hero, so long persecuted for the Church of God. Doubt not my discretion; thou shalt be as a sister to me, and, if thou wilt, a daughter and beloved friend."

Mathilda threw her arms around her neck, pressed her affectionately to her heart, and embraced her warmly. Yoland wept on her breast, promising her a daughter's love and devotion.

CHAPTER XVII.

HENRY IV.

THE little island of Saint Switbert, now Kaiserswerth, is situated in the middle of the Rhine, in a spot where the river, becoming wider, forms for it a crown of its limpid waves, in which are mirrored the willows, aspens, and poplars on its banks. In the year 1062, this island was an imperial residence. In the centre of it stood a large and sumptuous palace, whose richly-furnished halls opened on the two banks of the river and on the neighboring hills, whose declivities, covered with vines, meadows, and rich harvests, formed a magnificent carpet of verdure. On each of these eminences was built a castle, the noble dwelling of barons, whose tapering towers and turreted and crenelated walls stood out agaist the azure of heaven. The palace on the island was also surrounded by gardens, groves, and game-parks, and around each of the four gates of the edifice stood a double row of ancient trees, whose foliage formed a thick and verdant arch.

At the time of which we speak, this magnificent rural dwelling was occupied by a royal child and its mother. One day a beautiful little boat, all entwined with flowers, came down the river and approached the island. It very soon landed in a cove, cast anchor as it neared the shore, to which they lowered a bridge covered with rich Persian carpets. On the stern of the vessel was an elegant tower, in which were little rooms richly hung with velvet, brocade, and blue, yellow, or red satin, from which hung silken cords with golden acorns. Fringes and embroidery of marvellous workmanship still more heightened the effect of the rich tapestry; the furniture of this apartment was a masterpiece of taste and magnificence; the ornaments were of carved bronze, gilded or enamelled; the ceilings, inlaid with ebony, coral, or ivory, were decorated with heavy carvings, in which roses and other flowers were skilfully intertwined. On the windows were small canopies to shield the apartments from the heat of the sun. Slender pillars, in bright colors, supported them. On the balconies and on the windows were placed vases of carved silver, filled with foreign and indigenous flowers, giving forth the sweetest fragrance. Here and there, within the gilded bars of their elegant prison, sported birds of variegated plumage, who mingled their voices with the sweet harmony of a chorus of lutes, harps, guitars, and flutes, placed at the prow of the vessel. The oarsmen and sailors wore a uniform of apple-green and scarlet. They wore plumed hats, and floating scarfs tied round their waists. From the summit of the tower waved the archiepiscopal banner of Hanno of Cologne, who was sailing down, accompanied by several German princes, the peaceful waters of the river.

The young lord of the island was just then walking in the garden. At sight of this charming little vessel entering the porch, he approached the bank. He was at once courteously invited to visit the boat. He joyously crossed the bridge, covered with costly carpet, and advanced towards the rich apartments in the tower, where the princes and the archbishop waited to offer him their homage. But scarcely was he on board when the bridge was raised, the sails floated to the breeze, and the vessel, leaving the flowery cove, ploughed with its sharp prow the azure waves of the Rhine. The child, at first delighted, then surprised, to see the light craft afloat, soon began to suspect treason. He trembled with rage.

Nothing restrained him; he rushed towards the tower, reached, in two bounds, the edge of the vessel, and plunged into the middle of the river, swimming bravely towards the bank. But his clothing prevented him from struggling against the current, and he would have disappeared beneath the water had not the Count Egbert thrown himself into the river to save him. He seized him by the hair, and, aided by the boatmen, brought him aboard. At sight of this audacious attempt, and especially when they discovered the despairing act of the young king, there arose from the bank, covered with people, a cry, a shudder, and terrible imprecations. The poor mother, who had come thither attracted by the noise, seeing the craft skimming over the water, uttered heartrending cries, tore her hair, and with fixed and haggard eyes, from which tears were streaming, called upon her only son, who, from the deck of the boat, stretched his arms towards her claiming her protection.

This unhappy mother was the Empress Agnes; the child, King Henry IV., scarcely twelve years of age. When dying, the Emperor Henry III. had confided the guardianship of the young Henry to Pope Victor II. and to his mother Agnes. This princess governed the state with much wisdom, establishing peace and justice everywhere. She educated her son in a manner befitting a young prince who was one day to take the reins of so vast an empire. But Pope Victor being dead, the Empress, who desired to obtain the light and counsel of men renowned for their wisdom, chose, in preference to all other lords, Bishop Eric of Augsburg, a prelate of a gentle disposition, an amiable manner, and elevated mind. He shone no less by his genius than by his eminent virtues.

Envy, that fatal plague of courts, could not look contentedly on so much authority being concentrated in the hands of a single man. Several princes coveted a share. More daring than the others, Egbert, a cousin of the king, and Otho of Bavaria, leagued with Sigefroid, Archbishop of Mayence, and Adelbert of Bremen. They sought out the holy and austere Archbishop of Cologne, Hanno, whom they persuaded to remove the young Henry from the maternal influence, under the vain pretext of giving to Germany a king with an elevated mind and noble heart. "A woman," said they to him, "is not capable of forming him."

They then organized the attempt of which we have given an account.

This removal was the cause of all the errors of Henry. He had received from Heaven a firm and generous character, but he retained of it only the pride and irascibility. The fine side of his nature was replaced by the malignant cunning of the serpent, the cold cruelty of the hyena, and the fierceness of the leopard. Alas ! it could not be otherwise. The companions given him by the princes of the empire were cruel and ambitious men. The better to ruin the state by their plunder, to enrich themselves by the venality in the most important offices of the Church, instead of forming the young prince to virtue, they profited by his impetuous and fickle inclinations, and were careful not to correct his faults. The holy Archbishop Hanno sought indeed to reprove and chastise him ; his flatterers overwhelmed the venerable prelate with epigrams and satire, inducing his pupil, who was but too much inclined thereto, to disregard the advice of that severe censor, that old dotard. They did their part so well that the young prince soon lost all esteem or affection for his venerable preceptor ; after a time, he would no longer receive him. At length, delivered from that importunate mentor, Henry allowed himself to be carried away by the excess of every whim, always obeying the impetuosity of his age and his unrestrained passions. His infamous courtiers neglected nothing that might extinguish in his heart every sentiment of justice and goodness. They crushed his generous instincts and hardened his heart by the cruel sport of the chase. They placed him in contact with iniquitous, worthless, and heartless men, and accustomed him to despise holy things. They represented to him, in the most odious colors, men consecrated to God, and all those who had a reputation for wisdom and virtue. There was nothing to resist the whims, desires, and fancies of the young sovereign. One day, the venerable Hanno, finding himself obliged to reprove him and reproach him with his transgressions, the violent boy flew into such a transport of rage, that he threw himself, with drawn sword, upon the holy old man. He would have killed him had not those present restrained his sacrilegious arm.

Still, with these unhappy inclinations were united in Henry some natural qualities which might have rendered him the delight of Germany. In person he was well made, and, when he appeared in public, clad in armor, with his crested helmet, visor raised, his noble and amiable countenance commanded respect. But in his riper years his vices disfigured him completely. His eye became fierce and cruel, his features hard, his skin swarthy, his face gloomy and distorted by the vilest passions. To beguile him from the affairs of state, the courtiers were the first to offer him food for his vices. His soldiers soon imitated him, and, if he temporarily fixed his residence in a town or village, these places were treated by his officers and soldiers like a conquered country. The citizens and country people became the victims of exactions, outrages, and plunder of every kind.

The great barons, seeing the Emperor giving himself up to scandalous excesses, hoped that marriage would arrest him on this fatal descent. They decided, after a long illness, that he should marry Bertha, to whom he had been betrothed by his father. She was a princess of elevated mind and of rare beauty, who it would seem should have made the happiness of the king and the splendor of the throne.

Henry indeed married her, but this virtuous princess soon became odious to him. Just inasmuch as the Queen deserved his affection, he heaped insults on her. He wished to be separated from her at any price, but as he had no apparent motive for a divorce, he attempted to originate that of treason. This cowardly conduct did not succeed, and seeing that craft availed him nothing, he sought to openly repudiate Queen Bertha. Together with the princes of the empire, the archbishops and prelates energetically opposed this iniquity. Rome was alarmed at this unheard-of scandal in Christendom, as an infamous stain on the imperial majesty, as a bloody outrage to the whole German nation. Henry persisted in his hatred, and the Queen, hoping to recall him to milder sentiments, voluntarily descended from the throne and retired to the imperial Abbey of Loreschim, to the great grief of the Empress Agnes, who mourned over the excesses of her son. Meanwhile, the Saxons, Thuringians, and Suabians were angry at seeing their beautiful and unfortunate Queen so treated. The misconduct of Henry gave rise to serious revolts on the part of these people, tyrannized over in so many ways, and reduced to despair.

This depravity, so odious to those people, still rude, but jealous of their honor, was accompanied by perfidy and treason. Animated by a secret hatred against the Saxons and Thuringians, Henry had built in the centre of these strong and vast provinces, under the futile pretext of fortifying himself against the invasion of the Poles and Lithuanians, impregnable castles, on which he forced to work the very people whose extermination he meditated. He erected on the summits of mountains, at the entrance of valleys, and on inaccessible rocks, the forts of Wiganstentein, Moseburg, and Sassestein, in the province of Rohenstein; in Thuringia, Nasenburg, Hohemburg, and Volkenroth, on the lands of the Palatine Frederic. Immediately he placed therein cruel and rapacious garrisons, who swooped down on the plain like vultures, pillaging the farms and devastating the country, which was kept in continual alarm.

The people were indignant at the contempt with which Henry affected to receive Cardinal Peter Damian, legate *a latere* of the Holy See, who, at the Diet of Frankfort, declared to him, in the name of God and of the Church, that he must not annul the marriage which he had solemnly contracted with Queen Bertha. All the princes of the empire sided with the sentence of the Pope, and, in spite of his repugnance, Henry was obliged to submit to it. He recalled his wife, but this restraint so weighed upon him that on the arrival of the Queen he immediately departed for Saxony. A tender and faithful wife, Bertha followed him, imploring him to grant her a look of kindness and a word of affection. Henry at last yielded, to free himself from the importunities of the princes, who besought him to have pity on his unhappy wife. Still, he received her with a countenance so hard, with eyes so fierce, and a mien so cold, that the aversion with which she inspired him was but too evident.

On their part, the Saxons, enraged at the new insults of the King, abruptly left him, seeing the little regard which he paid to their princes and barons. In fact, he openly mocked and derided them in court and in the Diets. The revolt was terrible; the King, seeing his army beaten, promised them pardon. But when they had laid down their arms and had loyally sworn faith to treaties, the King attacked them unexpectedly and with such atrocious cruelty that one shudders in reading an account of that massacre in the histories of Lambert, Bruno, Arentine, and even of Usperg, although himself a relative and partisan of that odious tyrant.

The cruelty which he practised towards his subjects was nothing beside the cowardly dissimulation to which he stooped when he was overcome and the princes held him in their power. He humbled himself and asked their pardon, ascribing his excesses to the inexperience of youth, the levity of his mind, and the evil counsels of his courtiers. And these noble and generous princes, not content with forgiving him, rendered him the honors due to a sovereign, and offered him the homage of their faith. He loudly testified his gratitude, and, at the same time, he secretly raised new armies; then, when the provinces were unsuspectingly resting in peace and security, he pounced down upon them, besieged the towns, pillaged the country, and spread fire and blood on his way.

He made a treaty of peace with Thuringia. Whilst the loyal knights were confiding on the King's word, Henry suddenly laid siege to the forts of Beichlingen and Scherdingen, which he took without a blow. He marched on the other fortresses, which he laid in ruins. This disloyalty put a climax to the general indignation. The Saxons and Thuringians, in turn victor and vanquished, defeated the King and cut down the flower of his legions. Therefore, when, after the victory of Hohenburg, Henry marched upon Saxony at the head of a numerous army, he found himself immediately surrounded by all men of an age to carry arms. The whole country arose in a body to march to the contest and dispute with him the passage of the Elbe. Before these formidable troops Henry trembled, and foreseeing that he would undoubtedly be crushed if he tried the fortunes of the two armies, he resolved to conceal his weakness. He therefore sent to the enemy's camp ambassadors furnished with full powers; they were the Archbishops of Salzburg and Mayence, the Bishops of Augsburg and Würzburg, with Gothelo of

Lorraine, a prince gifted with rare eloquence and much esteemed throughout Germany. They were received with great honor, and, after long discussion, peace was concluded. Then the ambassadors demanded that the Saxon princes should present themselves before the King, and, bending the knee before him, declare themselves his faithful vassals. At this proposition a murmur of indignation went through the whole camp. "Henry," they cried, "demands that we disarm ourselves before him, only to cast us into the depths of his dungeons and ill-treat us at his will." The ambassadors, fortified by the sacred word of the King, who had told them to come to terms with the rebels at all hazards, raised their hand, and the bishops swore on the cross, Duke Gothelo by God and his sword, that the Emperor, after having received their homage, from which as his vassals he could not dispense them, would leave them their fiefs and their dignities with peace and liberty for all.

Then the princes, moved by the long misfortunes of their country, considering the fate which threatened such numbers of old men, women, and children, and considering how much blood and how many tears even victory would cost, stifled with magnanimous self-denial the voice of pride, and sacrificed all to peace. They therefore said to the bishops and the Duke that they were ready to offer their submission to Henry. The King had a throne erected in his tent, and, surrounded by the princes and his courtiers, he received the Saxons in presence of the whole army. The most illustrious representatives were Wezel, Archbishop of Magdeburg; Buch, Bishop of Alberstadt; Otho of Nordheim; Magnus, Duke of Saxony; Count Hermann; the Palatine Frederic; Adalbert, Landgrave of Thuringia; Counts Reudiger, Siltz, Bern, and Berenger. Followed by a large number of lords and nobles, they bent their knee before the King, and acknowledged him as their liege-lord.

As soon as Henry saw the lords at his mercy he forgot his oath, loaded them with chains, and cast them into gloomy cells, confiding the guard of them to their bitterest enemies. He confiscated their goods, and triumphantly overran Saxony, wreaking his fury upon the towns, and spreading terror, fire, and death upon his path.

By so audaciously violating the faith of his treaties, Henry had incurred the hatred and contempt of all the princes, and particularly of Rodolph of Suabia and Berthold of Zahringen. His treason and dishonor soon rendered him an object of horror to all.

During its sitting at Nuremberg, there appeared before the assembly of princes a noble and loyal knight, named Redinger. He told to Dukes Berthold and Rodolph that the King had commanded him to assassinate them with the other princes at Würzburg, by concealing some assassins in the hall where the Saxons were to withdraw after the meeting to collect the votes. "I was horrified at such baseness," continued Redinger, "and refused to lend myself to this abomination; the King, furious at my refusal, drove me from his presence, and would have had me put to death had I not taken flight."

At this revelation the princes shuddered. Some days before this Henry had slain one of his friends with his own hand, and had the young Conrad, his private secretary, treacherously stabbed in the woods of Harzburg. The Saxons notified the King that from that moment they considered themselves dispensed from their oath of fidelity, considering that he had committed in their regard an infamous perjury, and meditated their death. They added that they wished to have nothing more in common with him, either in peace or in war.

The perfidy of Henry went still further when holy things were concerned. That prince was always the irreconcilable enemy of the Church, and he used in her regard a twofold malice, with the same disloyalty which he had shown towards his princes and vassals. A long train of crimes, falsehood, calumny, and open treason marked his reign during the pontificate of Alexander II. This prince, a rebel to the Church, did not change his course of conduct under Pope Gregory, whom he always misled with vain promises. His words, ever hypocritical, made a parade of devotion and respect for the Church, whilst he mocked at the Holy See, made traffic of the dioceses and convents of Germany, selling to the highest bidder the bishoprics and abbeys, despoiling prelates and the monasteries of their goods and revenues, which he expended in the vilest orgies. A Protestant historian, Voigt, declares that Henry IV. respected nothing which came from the Holy Roman See; he mocked at the exhortations as at the decrees of the pontiffs, and said that no earthly authority was higher than that of the Emperor.

Still, when he saw himself threatened by the revolt of the Saxons and Thuringians, when the princes, wearied of his tyranny, abandoned him, and the people, irritated by his cruelty and extravagance, wished to shake off his detestable yoke, Henry felt the crown which he had thought so firmly settled on his brow tremble. He began to reflect seriously, and felt that he had no other resource than to apply to Pope Gregory.

Affecting the liveliest contrition, he wrote to the holy Pontiff a letter celebrated in the annals of human hypocrisy. He confessed himself guilty of the most horrible crimes, and continued: "Having obtained the crown from God, I have not always borne to the sacerdotal office the respect which is due to it; I have despised its sacred rights; I have oftener drawn the sword to oppress the innocent than to punish the guilty. But now, moved by the grace of God, repenting and entering into myself, my head bowed in the dust, I confess to your most indulgent Holiness my past offences. I hope that, after having obtained from the apostolic authority pardon and absolution of my crimes, I shall also have received the pardon of the Most High. Alas! alas! with how many iniquities do I find myself laden! I have often prevaricated through levity and the passions of my youth, or by the pride and license of power, or by the temptations of the most detestable flatterers. Yes, I have sinned before Heaven and before thee, O my father! and I am not worthy to be called thy son; for not only have I stolen the things consecrated to God, but I have sold churches to base, unprincipled, and dissolute men. I have not defended, as I should have done, the episcopal sees against the rapine and violence of the impious. And as I cannot remedy so many evils and so much destruction, I have recourse to thee, Holy Father, for thy counsel and assistance, promising thee, for the future, the most humble and profound obedience in all things."

In reading this letter, the holy Pope Gregory was filled with joy. He imparted to the Countess Mathilda and to several archbishops and princes of Germany the hopes with which the sincere conversion of the Emperor inspired him. The holy Pontiff judged Henry by himself. He was soon undeceived. Henry, having conquered the Saxons in an important battle, resumed all his arrogance, and, after having avenged himself on his adversaries, he at once recommenced his persecution of the Church. Herman, Bishop of Bamberg, having been deposed for simony by the Sovereign Pontiff, Henry immediately named to that important See Rupert of Goslar, a man of an execrable reputation, and whom the people regarded as the chief counsellor of the tyrant. The Abbot of Fulda had just died. It was the most famous monastery of Germany at the time. Henry immediately convoked the chapter to name a new abbot, and, while he had put up that mitre to the highest bidder, he perceived outside of the hall the monk Ruttelin of Hersfeld, who had come to the abbey on business. He called him, placed the ring on his finger, and gave him the pastoral cross, saluting him as abbot, to the great astonishment of all present, and especially of the poor monk. At the death of the Abbot Ulric of Lorsch, the monks proposed to the Emperor a man notable for his knowledge and virtue. The Prince, in a sudden whim, saw a young monk sitting in a corner:

"Eh!" said he, "come here."

The monk came trembling.

"Is it I whom thou callest, Sire?"

"Yes, get there."

And he gave him the investiture of the abbey. He sold the episcopal sees, and if some ambitious wretch offered him a large sum of money, he received the investiture. It sometimes happened that a higher bidder would present himself. "Sire, I offer thee a thousand marks more." Henry would replace the first prelate by the second, and often Christian people had two bishops, and knew not which they obeyed.

To these sacrileges were added the complaints and accusations of the Saxons, who appealed to the Pope against the excessive tyranny and impiety of their sovereign. They declared that the government of the empire was given up to the whims of base men, whom the Emperor sent to the election of bishops, prelates, and abbots, to the great scandal of the faithful.

The Pope was not unaware of these enormities, and long before he received the complaints of the Saxons he had written gravely and severely to Henry, commanding him to return to his obedience to the Church. He further warned him that it was not allowable to have such intimate connection with men excommunicated by councils and condemned by the Vicar of Jesus Christ. He exhorted him to become converted, and to confess to a bishop who had received from the Holy See the power to absolve him from so many crimes.

After the affair with the Saxons, Gregory wrote to him again. He commanded him to set at liberty the bishops whom he was keeping prisoners, or whom he had banished from the state, and at the same time to restore to them their goods which he had confiscated, the churches of which he had deprived them. The Pope added that if the Emperor, after so many prayers, counsels, and positive orders, should persist in his rebellion to the decrees of the Father of the Faithful, and in his connection with those condemned, the sword of Saint Peter would itself cut him off from the maternal bosom of the Church. At this threat of excommunication, Henry was at first intimidated, then, inflamed with the pride of his recent victories, he became furiously angry, and, to prove to the Pope that he feared his censures no more than he respected his authority, at the death of Hanno, Archbishop of Cologne, he elected and invested with that see Idulfe, his chaplain, in spite of the clergy and the people, and despising the sacred canons.

After these events, the legates of the Holy See signified to the King that he must appear before the Council of Rome, to answer to the accusations which the Saxons had made against him, and that under pain of being declared a rebel to the Church and deprived of the crown. Henry flew into a violent rage, drove the legates from his presence, and sent couriers to all the bishops and princes of his party. He immediately convoked the Synod of Worms, which uttered the blackest and most absurd calumnies against Gregory. It declared him guilty of simony, sorcery, murder, heresy, and worship of Satan. Henry, who knew the eminent holiness of Gregory, laughed in his sleeve at these extravagant absurdities; but the bishops having come to proclaim the Pope deposed, he was the first to subscribe to this declaration. He sent the sacrilegious decrees of Worms to the schismatic bishops of Italy, especially to those of Lombardy and the Marches of Ancona, who swore never again to acknowledge the authority of Gregory. He had himself the impudence to address an imperious letter to the Sovereign Pontiff, in which he repeated the gross falsehoods of Worms. He added: "I, King of Germany, do pronounce thy deposition from all the rights of the Holy See which thou hast usurped, and I command thee to descend from the chair of Rome." He wrote at the same time to the Romans, enjoining on them to expel Gregory from the Pontifical throne.

Meanwhile, the Holy Father had assembled a council at Rome. At the first session, at which the

Pope presided, surrounded by bishops, the Prefect of Rome, nobles, and people, suddenly presented himself before that august assembly a schismatic priest from Parma named Roland, who arrogantly exclaimed to the Sovereign Pontiff :

"I am the ambassador of King Henry, and I summon thee, in his name, to descend from that chair which thou hast usurped." Then, addressing the bishops :

"I command you, in the Emperor's name, to present yourselves before his throne at the Feast of Pentecost, so as to receive from his hands a Pope, being understood that Gregory is not a Pontiff, but a ravenous wolf."

And he threw to Gregory a letter from Henry. At this impudent language every one present was filled with anger. The noble Romans had already drawn their swords to cut the messenger to pieces, but Gregory made a shield of his own body, and cried :

"Shed not blood in the church of God ! My brethren, await patiently, I pray you, for the hour of retribution."

He calmly opened Henry's letter and read it aloud. The Pope, seeing that all the bishops were moved to indignation, would not continue the session that day. Next day, in that august assembly, he solemnly excommunicated Henry and his principal accomplices. He notified the German archbishops and princes of the reasons which had determined him to this act, which was forcible, but necessary for the maintenance of the unity of the Church. Gregory made it especially known in this letter that the Emperor, under fine words, was trampling under foot the divine laws, making the most abominable traffic of sacred orders and holy things, and seeking to destroy the unity of the Church.

The thunders of Rome agitated the whole of Germany and made there a painful impression. Henry himself experienced a great shock at the first news. He was just then at Utrecht for the festival of Easter. But William, Bishop of that See, who was very hostile to Gregory, reassured the King, persuaded him not to fear the censures of the Pope, and, the day of that Feast; mounted the pulpit to give vent to his hatred against the lawful Pastor of the Church, whom he called a perjurer, an infamous wretch unworthy of the tiara, the abominable and detestable enemy of God. Scarcely had he come down from the pulpit when he was seized with violent pains. He fell down writhing and working, retracting the calumnies which he had uttered against Gregory, and confessing himself guilty of the King's sins and of the scandal given by him to the faithful. One of Henry's courtiers having come to visit him, he exclaimed, in his dying voice :

"Tell thy King that he, I, and the workers of so much iniquity, are lost !"

"Then, turning towards the clergy who surrounded his bed :

"I am damned," said he ; "pray not for me !"

And he died in despair. Several other bishops of the Synod of Worms were punished in the same manner, amongst others Bernard of Wisnie, Heppon of Zeitz, and Duke Gothelo, who perished miserably. These sudden chastisements of the heavenly vengeance increased still more the terror of all Germany, already alarmed by the Pope's rigorous act. Before the wrath of the successor of St. Peter the frightened bishops and princes tremblingly became converted; they made a pilgrimage to Rome to implore absolution for their crimes. Those who kept in prison the Saxon princes and prelates, of whom Henry had obtained possession by treason, released them in spite of the King.

Two brothers, Theodoric and Wilhelm, sons of Count Gero, burning with love for their country, which had groaned so long beneath the yoke of Henry, went through Saxony, inciting them to throw off so cruel a bondage. The freed princes, brave young men, the friends of Saxony, rallied at the voice of the two brothers, and the whole people took up arms. The Saxons sounded their war-cry. The most faithful friends of Henry abandoned him, spite of his hypocritical tears, to protest their devotion and obedience to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Rodolph of Suabia, Berthold of Carinthia, Adalbert of Würzburg, Hermann of Metz, and Guelph of Bavaria, separated from the Emperor to form a league in the heart of Germany. Seeing himself reduced to such a deplorable extremity, Henry made fine promises to the Saxons, but they who had so often experienced his bad faith remained deaf to his entreaties. He convoked a Diet at Worms, and invited all the princes to assist at it, but none presented themselves. Rodolph, Guelph, Berthold, and Adalbert assembled at Ulm, and induced all those who had at heart the glory of the empire and the peace of the Church to meet in a fortnight at the Palace of Treurer, to proceed to the election of a new emperor in case Henry should refuse to submit sincerely to the Holy See, to expel from the court his infamous favorites and his evil counsellors, and to restore to the Church her lawful pastors. At the same time, they sent to the Holy Father Count Mangolde of Varingen, and Eudon, Archbishop of Treves, to make known to him the proceedings at Treurer, and to invite his Holiness to the general Diet of all the states of Germany and Italy, which was to be held at Augsburg.

This Diet was fixed for the 2d of February. Gregory, in spite of his great age, the severity of the season, and the length of the journey across the snow-covered mountains, promised to repair thither. He kept his word, and set out about the middle of December, with a strong escort of Tuscan warriors whom the Countess Mathilda had sent to meet him. Henry, on his part, seeing that the months were passing rapidly, and that, if he let the year of excommunication pass, he would be deprived of his rights to the crown, according to the ancient law of Germany, resolved to go into Italy to the presence of the Pope, to cast himself at his feet, and to obtain absolution. He lost no time, set out from Spire, and proceeded to Lombardy, passing through Burgundy.

Beholding the portrait which we have given of this prince, the reader will doubtless say that the painter of this picture has chosen to fill his palette with the darkest colors. And truly, Henry IV. is a cruel and sinister type, a real tyrant, the Nero of the eleventh century! Yet this picture is but a sketch, a mere rudely-drawn outline, without soul, without being. What would it be did we reproduce the portrait which has been left us of Henry, not by a hypocrite, a Papist, a poor obscure monk of the Middle Ages, but a man of lofty genius, sound judgment, vast and accurate erudition, a sagacious observer of the period which we have undertaken to describe, a heart most indifferent to the triumph of the Catholic Church, to which he did not belong, to the glory of a Pope whose authority he did not recognize, the Protestant Jean Voigt; in a word, an eminent mind, an elegant writer, who borrowed from the friends and enemies of Henry all the materials which were offered him by the most severe critic of history to trace a true portrait of that hero. If the picture is repulsive, it is neither Voigt's fault nor ours. We have sought, especially, to draw from the disloyalty of Henry an argument in defence of Gregory, whom numerous writers have taxed with pride, arrogance, and exaggerated cruelty. The Pope's fears were but too well founded. Henry, after many supplications, tears, and protestations, was scarcely relieved from his excommunication (thanks to the intervention of the Countess Mathilda) when he sought to obtain possession of the Pope and of the illustrious lady, to put them to death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GREGORY VII.

Between Lake Vico and Viterbo, at the foot of Mount Cimone, there was collected a great number of warriors, troops, and horses. Young mountaineers crossed the steep ascents, climbed the loftiest peaks, to scour the distant plain, in the direction of the valleys which intersperse the country from Rome to Ronciglione. At the head of the men-at-arms and courtiers were the Lords of Spoleto, Amalia, Perugia, Camerino, and other barons, vassals of the illustrious Countess Mathilda of Canossa. All were magnificently apparelled, mounted on noble coursers superbly harnessed and covered with plates of silver, with waving saddle-cloths embroidered in gold. Each of them was preceded by an outrider bearing the banner of his lord; pages, in tunics of cloth of gold and scarlet, carried cups and vases, some filled with money, others with meat, pastry, and exquisite wines. All at once the sentinels placed on the heights above waved their white banners, and all the troops collected at the foot of the mountain shouted: "It is he! he has come!" At this signal, they fell into line all along the route, and waited.

These were the troops of the Countess Mathilda; she had despatched them from Lucca, Pisa, and the other Tuscan cities to increase the retinue of the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory VII., who was coming from Rome with a number of cardinals and prelates to assist in person at the Diet of Augsburg, to which he had been urgently invited by the German princes. When the warriors beheld him arrive beside Lake Vico, they uttered exclamations of joy and struck their shields with their swords. The barons riding forward alighted from their horses, and bent their knee before the Sovereign Pontiff. They kissed his feet, and offered him presents. The Pope received them kindly, blessed them, and placed on either side of him the Lords of Spoleto and Camerino, who would not remount their steeds. They led his mule by the bridle to the summit of the mountain, where they yielded that honor to the Viterbians, who had hastened to the front of the procession followed by a troop of knights.

Gregory wore a large cape lined with gray fur and bordered with ermine. He had also enveloped himself to guard against the cold in a large cloak of cloth lined with lambskin. In spite of this precaution the holy old man had suffered a great deal from the snow and the cold mountain air. But his vigorous soul was not made to yield to the malice of men or the obstacles of nature. He was a man of noble and austere mien, of middle height, and with an eye piercing, yet serene. His brow was lofty, his head large and a little bald towards the front. His countenance inspired confidence and respect, and his speech, soft and sonorous, had a persuasive charm which won all hearts. His manner was a happy mixture of majesty and gentleness, of greatness tempered by humility, and of energy softened by the charity with which his great heart was consumed.

In reading history calmly and impartially, examining, one by one, all the acts of his tempestuous life, we find Gregory possessed of a heart of iron, the ardor of a lion, an inconceivable activity, a firm and well-balanced mind, and, at once, the gentleness of the lamb, the simplicity of the dove, and a mother's tenderness. That eye, whose imperious glances made tyrants tremble, was ever turned with kindness on the poor, and often shed sweet tears before the holy altar. The liberty of the Church was the only desire of his life; his every action, all his words, had no other end than this. For the Church he braved the sword, and engaged in supreme combats. Christian kings found in him a bulwark against the insubordination of their people, and the people a defender against the oppression of kings. In spite of the bitterness which overwhelmed him from the iniquities of Henry IV., who in Germany arrogated to himself the sovereign right of nominating the bishops and disposing of the goods of the Church, he ceased not to send his legates and his letters to the kings of Norway, Denmark, Sweden, England, France, Hungary, Bohemia, and Spain, as if each of these were the sole object of his paternal solicitude.

Still the times were evil. Sometimes the princes, sometimes the bishops, despised the authority of the Vicar of Christ and refused to submit to it. Ever unshaken, Gregory resisted, like a wall of brass, the attacks of the wicked and the pride of rebels.

But Henry, in his stubborn resolve to dash himself against the rock of the Vatican, could not fail to find accomplished in himself one day the threat of Jesus Christ: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." God reserved for Gregory the triumph of seeing humbled at his feet this man who for so many years had oppressed him, by despising in his person Christ himself. But the holy Pontiff, a stranger to all thought of ambition, had only undertaken that long and painful journey in the hope of recalling that erring king to better sentiments, so as to restore peace to the Church and tranquillity to the whole of Germany, torn by the fiercest dissensions. This sublime idea had made him brave the passage of the Apennines to reach Lombardy, and the most terrible dangers of the Alps, which he had to cross before entering Germany.

At Viterbo, Gregory received the homage of the barons of Orte, of Bevagna, and Corneto, in presence of an immense multitude who had collected on his passage, braving snow and ice to have the happiness of beholding his face and receiving his benediction. The holy Pontiff found everywhere this consolation, so sweet to his heart. The faith and love of these simple mountaineers consoled him for the pride and arrogance of the great, who despised in the Vicar of God the censor of their crimes. He stopped at Bolsena, to visit the tomb of St. Christina, martyred in the ancient city of Tiro. Thence he proceeded to the collegiate church erected by the Countess Mathilda, and there received the clergy of the town, as also those of Soana, his native place, which might well be proud of having given to the throne of St. Peter a great saint, a great pope, and the greatest man of his age.

On the banks of the Paglia had assembled from Acquapendente, and all the castles whose turrets are outlined against the wooded slopes of the Apennines, numerous bands of men, on foot and on horseback, to guard the ford of the river and remove from his path the stones which encumbered it. At the arrival of the Pope, twenty-four horsemen rode into the river, and took up their position there in two lines facing each other. The Pope rode into the water, escorted by mountaineers of great height, who kept the bridle of his mule and held up the stirrups to prevent them from getting wet. Whilst crossing the water, they kissed the Holy Father's feet, saying: "Courage, Holy Father; fear not!" They thus reached the other bank, and the procession made a halt. Gregory caused his almoner to distribute some marks of silver, also bread and wine, with which they drank his health.

At this period, the road most frequented in going to Tuscany was not that of Radicofani, but the mountains of San Fiore, with their narrow and deep defiles, their slopes bordered with fortresses which overlooked the path. The Castle of San Fiore itself was occupied by a numerous garrison, who defended the gorges of the pass. The roads were rough, tortuous, enclosed, and overhanging abysses which inspired the passer-by with terror. In a severe season, the snow which rolled down from the neighboring heights obstructed a great part of the road. The hard and polished ice prevented horses from walking, even though their shoes were furnished with spikes. To these dangers were added that of the avalanches, which rolled down the sides of the mountain, carrying with them, as in a torrent, trees and portions of rock.

In order to facilitate the Pope's journey, the Countess Mathilda had sent bands of pioneers to level the slopes, fill up ravines, break the masses of ice, throw the trunks of trees over the torrents to serve as bridges, and to smooth the unevenness of the road. In the most dangerous places they planted stakes, and on steep descents they made cuts and furrows, to give a footing for horses and mules. These same mountaineers at the present day still form a rude and rustic race. In the eleventh century they were clad in wolf or goat skin, and their hair was concealed by a cap of fox or rabbit skin, which covered their temples and ears. But beneath this rude covering beat noble hearts, ready to brave all dangers. At the Pope's approach they knelt down in the snow, ice, and mud, their hands clasped, their heads bare in spite of the rain, to receive his benediction—a precious token, which they bore with them into their poor cabins, and of which the recital, after having edified their families, was transmitted as a domestic legend to future generations.

Gregory was deeply touched by these marks of respect. He admired the goodness of God towards these simple souls, whilst he was horrified at the insolence of the proud, who, blinded by their passions, no longer see the true light, and believe themselves great because they refuse to bow their head before the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Some wretches at the Synod of Worms had erased his name from the number of pontiffs, proclaiming him deposed from dignity, power, and authority, loading him with curses and insults; but the people were uninfluenced by the envy or cunning of these cruel enemies of the Pope, and hastened from all parts, pressing eagerly round his feet, to see and honor him as the supreme pastor of nations and the representative of God on earth.

It was reserved for us, after the lapse of eight centuries, to behold the same fury raging around the head of the august Pius IX. We have seen a band of rebels of all nations uttering horrible imprecations against him, and from the height of the Capitol proclaiming him deposed from his authority and power over Rome. But soon did Catholic arms re-establish Pius IX. on the throne of the Vatican, and we have seen him pass in triumph, not only through town and country of his States, but through the whole of Italy, from Sebeto to Panaro, amid the ovations of the people, who crowded on his path to see, to gaze on him with love, and to receive his benediction.

The adversaries of Gregory VII. were the pillagers of the goods of the Church—dissolute men, who contemned the divine laws. The enemies of Pius IX., as Pope and as monarch, are men who despise all legitimate power, and who, after having banished God from the earth, substitute for him humanity, blinded by their pride, like the first angel, who wished to raise himself a throne above the stars, and seat himself beside God. Only, these latter are prouder, if not more malicious, than Satan himself, and do not even deign to reign equally with God; it is his divinity which they attack and endeavor to overthrow to become themselves the gods of the earth. Scarcely do they admit one goddess, their country. But her being deified costs her dear. Her wealth is stolen, her churches and palaces burned, her princes banished, her ancient laws destroyed, all her glory trodden under foot, and her children—who are still simple enough to acknowledge and adore God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world, to respect their Mother, the Holy Church, to render homage and obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ—are slain.

Such are the doctrines which we see reproduced more or less openly every day under the exterior of an elegant and florid style. They are found in books, in journals, in public discourses, on the stage; they are circulated in the army, on board vessels, are re-echoed in public places, propagated in magazines, studios, workshops.

In every way they take pains to demonstrate that the Pope is a great obstacle to the liberty and independence of Italy; that, the sovereignty of the Holy Father abolished, Italy would at once become *one* and *undivided!* Happy are the Protestants who can manage their affairs without a Pope; happier still Italy if she could some day decide on abjuring the tradition of St. Peter, to give herself, body and soul, to Luther or Calvin.

In the gorges of the Apennines, in the heart of winter, Gregory saw these rude mountaineers brave ice and snow, tempests and avalanches, to behold him for an instant; Pius IX., on the other hand, sees immense crowds of luxurious citizens, noble ladies and delicate maidens, await him for long hours beneath the scorching rays of the dog-star, regardless of the heat, motionless and with uncovered heads, as though they were in the shelter of the foliage. After having seen him at one place, they hasten to see him again at a convent, a hospital, a church; the great basilicas of Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, Florence, Pisa, Sienna, and Lucca were filled with people, and the crowd who awaited him without in the fervid heat of the sun or under torrents of rain was still more numerous than that which thronged these vast edifices. All the streets through which the Sovereign Pontiff was to pass were filled with a crowd so dense that the horses could scarcely move one foot after another, and they often found themselves obliged to stop before the people who knelt to receive his blessing. Neither barriers nor enclosures could restrain this torrent; they surmounted all obstacles to surround their beloved father, who blessed his children with a gentle glance, and, regardless of the wheels, threw themselves on the steps of the Pope's carriage to kiss his hands and again receive his benediction.

And yet these are the people, we are told, who would sacrifice the Pope to the independence of Italy! Nevertheless, it is deplorable that they allow agitators to convulse the country without imposing on them the restraint of the sacred laws of religion and the rights of the people.

Gregory VII. found, in the gorges of Mount Amiata, many difficult passages, especially towards the river Orcia, which had overflowed its bed. The woodcutters of the country attached a stone to a thick rope, throwing the end of it to the mountaineers on the other bank. These latter fastened it to the trunk of a tree; then the former held it firmly, and knotted the other end to an oak. The knights of the vanguard at first attempted the passage; after them came the Pope, holding firmly by the cable. His whole retinue crossed the river in the same manner. This precaution was not useless, for the river, running rapidly, foamed up round the horses' flanks, and the impetuosity of the current might have carried them off.

In those times, when Europe was still wild, there were no highways. The means of communication, narrow and irregular, were broken by marshes and swamps, and obstructed with obstacles which were often very dangerous; no bridges on the rivers or streams. Immense tracts of country were covered with thick forests and swamps, which could not be crossed on horseback. Therefore it is that we have such difficulty in understanding how so many pilgrims could make the journey to Rome. This did not hinder the Sovereign Pontiffs from continually sending cardinal legates into France, Germany, Sweden, England, and Norway. Very often we are annoyed at being obliged to travel on convenient roads, smooth, broad, enlivened by beautiful rows of trees. We complain of burning sun, of severe cold, and yet we are carried along on soft cushions, spring seats, protected from cold by glass, from the sun by curtains; we fly along on the wings of steam, impatient to arrive at the end of a journey of some hours which seem like ages to us, whilst our ancestors could only accomplish it painfully in several days. Whence proceeds this difference? It is that these men were of a more energetic mould, of a more ardent and vigorous will, of firmer resolution, and of a more intrepid character.

The departure of the Pope from Lombardy had not been a matter of indifference to the Countess Mathilda, deeply penetrated from her earliest youth with respect and love, which withstood all trials, for the Holy Apostolic See. When she had been informed of it, she abandoned the pleasures of her court, took horse with the flower of Italian knighthood, and in the cold and hardship of winter set out from Canossa, following the crest of the Apennines. She crossed the dangerous defile of Mount Bourdon to go down to Pontremoli, and thence journeyed through Lucca and Pisa, where she expected to meet the Sovereign Pontiff.

The Pisans, at that period, recognized the sovereignty of Mathilda. They were hardy mariners who enriched themselves at once by their traffic on the sea and by their fertile territory. At the first rumor of the arrival of the Pope, they began preparations to give him a splendid reception. All the ships then in port were decorated, and ranged themselves in the mouth of the Arno as far as Pisa, covered with sumptuous Eastern carpets, and displaying from every mast a thousand bright-colored flags. All the streets through which the procession was to pass were hung with damask, brocade, satin, and velvet, with broad fringe of gold, strewn with flowers or covered with costly carpets. The Countess Mathilda, mounted on a snow-white horse, advanced to meet Gregory at the head of all the barons. Having reached him, she alighted and knelt before him; the Pontiff raised her graciously, and gave her his hand to kiss. Twenty-four of the richest Pisan gentlemen, clad in large mantles of cloth-of-gold, carried each in turn the poles of the canopy under which the Pope advanced, having on his left the illustrious Countess, who respectfully remained a little behind, with bowed head, in the modest attitude of a daughter in presence of her father.

The Archbishop, followed by all his clergy, came forth from the cathedral to receive the Pope, who proceeded to kneel before the altar of that vast and majestic basilica, even at that epoch the most splendid monument of the piety and munificence of the Pisans, who opened, in Italy, the golden gate of the arts. As long as they remained faithful to the Vicar of God, their power and glory ever increased; but they soon lost their splendor when they allied themselves with the oppressors of the Pope and the Church.

Gregory knelt and blessed all present; then he was conducted by the Countess Mathilda to the tomb of the Duchess Beatrice, where he prayed for the repose of that illustrious heroine, whose arms, whose treasures, and whose counsel had so long sustained the Pontiff Alexander II. against the persecution of Henry, the intrigues of Gilbert, the perfidy of the wicked, the invasions of the Normans, and the impiety of the anti-pope Cadolaüs. But, in the eyes of Gregory, the greatest merit of that illustrious woman was the solid and religious education which she had given to Mathilda, teaching her to combat, from her earliest years, within the camp of the Lord.

From Pisa the Holy Father proceeded to Lucca, which was then the seat of the Marquisate of Tuscany, and of the parliament of Mathilda's vast states. In that town, the magnificence of the palaces is only surpassed by the splendor of the gorgeous temples. On the entrance of the Pontiff all the bells of the city pealed out joyously; an immense multitude who had hastened thither from all the surrounding places thronged the basilica of Saint Frederic, where the Pope was solemnly received by the canons and clergy. Some priests who had been guilty of simony had deposed from his see Saint Anselm, the bishop, counsellor, and spiritual guide of Mathilda. But the saints have all but one way of avenging themselves; the holy prelate, banished, calumniated, forced from his pastoral see, cast himself at Gregory's feet to implore pardon for these guilty men.

Yoland was still at the court of Mathilda, who loved her as her own daughter. She had brought her into Tuscany, where the poor child had the consolation, very sweet to her heart, of being enabled frequently to kiss the feet of the Holy Father and receive his benediction. Now, two days after his arrival at Lucca, the Pope, returning from the new cathedral of Saint Martin, which the Countess had erected at great cost, found Mathilda and Yoland awaiting him at his apartments. Before leaving, the latter advanced to kiss his feet, and said, as she arose:

"Holy Pontiff, deign also to bless my father, who for so many years has pined in exile because of the ardent love which he has never ceased to bear to the holy Pope Alexander, and to thyself, his worthy successor."

Gregory looked kindly at her, and, seeing her weep, he asked the Countess Mathilda who the damsel was.

"She is the daughter of the Count of Groningen," replied she.

Then the Pope, turning to Yoland, exclaimed with a sweet smile:

"Thou art the daughter of a noble champion of the Holy Church, who hath suffered much for justice' sake; but we trust that his long and sorrowful exile is, thanks to God, ended for ever."

"He lives concealed near the shrine of Boleslau as a poor pilgrim," said Yoland.

"No, my daughter," replied the Pope; "I have lately received some letters which apprise me that the greater number of the German princes have abandoned Henry because of his tyranny towards his vassals and his infidelity towards the Church. They have convoked to the Diet of Treuver all the barons freed from prison or still under ban of the empire. The Count of Groningen, thy father, was at length enabled to leave his retreat and appear at the Diet, where all the princes received him with great demonstrations of joy. They obliged the Brandenburgians to restore him his states, with all his seignorial rights, and to repair all the injury which this unjust and cruel usurpation has caused him. Count Pandolph imparted to me these happy tidings, which filled me with joy; his name appears amongst those who have invited me to the Diet of Augsburg for the Feast of the Purification."

At these words Yoland raised her eyes to heaven, and, her heart penetrated with a joy which shone on her face, she said humbly:

"Thanks be to thee, O my God! and to thee, most sweet and merciful Queen! who hast heard the prayer of thy servant."

Then, no longer able to bear the tumult of her thoughts, she gracefully took leave of the Holy Father, and retired in great agitation to her apartments. Then the Countess Mathilda related to the Pope the persecution of the young Marquis of Brunn and the sad adventures of the virtuous young girl.

Whilst the Sovereign Pontiff was conversing with the Countess, Saint Anselm came to announce the arrival of a German knight who declared himself the bearer of despatches of great importance for his Holiness and her Serene Highness the Countess.

"I come," said he, "from the heart of Germany, and I stopped at Canossa, hoping there to find the Countess. I learned that she had crossed the Apennines to meet his Holiness. I then changed my course, and I desire, even before taking the least repose, to have a short audience with them."

"Admit the knight," said Gregory to the lackey who announced him.

The gates were raised to give passage to a warrior of great height, with helmet on head. He wore a breastplate of steel, and a coat of mail reaching to his knees. In place of plates of steel for his limbs he had breeches of mail of the same temper as his armor. He knelt down on the threshold, took the same posture in the middle of the hall, and, arriving before the throne, prostrated himself to kiss the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ with tender effusion. He exclaimed:

"Now I can die!"

Gregory raised him affectionately, and said:

"Sir knight, explain the object of thy mission, to which the Countess Mathilda and myself will listen most willingly."

"Most Holy Father," said the knight, "the evils which King Henry has drawn upon us by his excesses have reached their height. At thy voice, heard in the Council of Rome, all Germany was agitated, and all who still cherished a single spark of faith in their hearts received thy word as the voice of God. On the return of Eudo, Bishop of Treves, who refused to hold communication with the Archbishops of Cologne and Mayence, as having been deaf to the warnings of your Holiness, all the princes, lay and clerical, conceived such a fear of the judgments of God that they abandoned the court of Henry.* The Emperor sought to put a fair face on it; and to conciliate the Saxons and Thuringians, he drew from prison, where he had treacherously retained them, the princes who had not before made their escape, among them the Bishops of Magdeburg, Merseburg, and of Misnia, Duke Otho of Nordheim, Duke Magnus, and Frederic, Palatine of the Rhine. But seeing that the Saxons placed no faith in his promises, that they feared his malice and deceit,† he hastily raised an army, and, claiming the aid of the King of Bohemia, he attacked Misnia and devastated all with fire and sword. The Saxons, with all their princes, then marched against him, numerous and terrible; so that Henry, already encamped on the river Mult, was forced to retreat precipitately, and, crossing Bohemia and Bavaria, he took refuge in Worms in shame and anger.‡

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* Annals Treves, Book XII.

† Annals Sax., A.D. 1076.

‡ Lamb., A.D. 1070.

"Thou knowest, Most Holy Father, that the princes of Germany, seeing Henry's obstinate disobedience to the Church and his disloyalty towards the great vassals of the Empire, assembled at Treuver to pronounce his deposition and to elect another king, faithful to God, just and mild in his sway. The paternal love which thou hast ever borne towards Henry determined thee to send to that Diet thy legates *a latere*—Siccard, Patriarch of Aquila, and Altmann, Bishop of Padua—who had orders before pronouncing his deposition to try every gentle means to induce Henry to enter into himself and become sincerely reconciled with the Church.* All Germany, assembled at Treuver, admired thine immense charity, thine excessive patience and longanimity towards a man who had so often deceived, insulted, and persecuted thee unto death.

"Henry, warned that the Diet had assembled to elect a new king, retired to the Castle of Oppenheim, between Mayence and Treuver, and thence he unceasingly sent ambassadors to the Diet to conciliate the suffrages and the good-will of that august assembly. But the princes, with whom he had so often trifled, remained inflexible. However, to prevent him from having resort to any extreme measure, they sent him an embassy of Saxons and Suabians, to make known to him that they had sent his sentence of condemnation or of absolution to your Holiness, whom they were going to invite to the Diet of Augsburg; but that if he had not been released from his sentence of excommunication within the term of a year, he would be deposed from all part in or right to the royal prerogatives. They commanded him to restore the church of Worms to the Bishop Adalbert of Rheinfeldt, whom he had expelled by force,* and to acknowledge himself, by decree, guilty of injustice and cruelty towards Saxony, Thuringia, and Swabia, of which confession a copy should be sent to Italy. He must then repair to Rome to implore pardon of your Holiness, and to submit to thy orders; to expel from his court all excommunicated persons; to dissolve the army; to strip himself of the insignia of royalty; to return to private life and place himself under the spiritual direction of the Bishop of Verdun and some other holy priests. They finally forbade him to visit either churches or holy places during the whole time of his interdict. To these conditions Henry, inwardly convulsed with rage, but hoping at this price to retain the crown of Germany, swore to submit in every point; and to fulfil the injunctions of the Diet he at once retired, with his wife and son, into a castle of Spire.†

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* Chron. Aug., A.D. 1078.

"Amid a profound silence and gloomy solitude, the Emperor lived like a hermit, without wishing any communication with any living being. He took no care of his person, cut neither his nails nor his hair; his bristling and disordered beard made him appear like a savage. Always pensive, taciturn, a prey to sadness, nothing could distract his mind from the deep melancholy which consumed it day and night. The Queen, who had not abandoned him in his days of trial, had become endeared to him; her sweetness and affability tempered a little the intense bitterness of the remorse which preyed upon his heart. When she saw him gloomier than usual, she would bring him her little Conrad, who would jump upon his father's knee and tenderly caress him.

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* St. Gregory, Epist. IV., 3.

† Voigt, p. 476.

"However, the days were passing, and Henry saw with terror the approach of the fatal term which the princes of the empire had assigned him, in virtue of the Palatine laws, which declared deposed from all rights to the crown of Germany the prince who, in the space of a year, had failed to obtain the absolution of the Holy See. Abandoned by all, without courtiers, without soldiers, without money, Henry had fallen from the pinnacle of grandeur into an abyss of misery. He roared like a wounded lion, struck his forehead, and cried, like the prodigal child: 'I will arise and go to my father!' . . . With his wife, her child, and some servants, he set out for Italy. On learning of his departure, Rudolph of Suabia, Guelph of Bavaria, and Berthold of Carinthia, hastily placed guards at the defiles of the Tyrol, beside the Eisach, Adige, Tagliamento, and Piave.* But Henry, who suspected their designs, turned into Burgundy and made arrangements to go into Italy by the Cottian

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* Lambert, 1077.

Alps. As soon as I was informed of it, I jumped into the saddle, and resolved not to stop till I had cast myself at the feet of your Holiness to inform you of this great news. On the way I met many German archbishops, bishops, and abbots, who, mourning the scandal of Worms, wished to cast themselves at thy feet to solicit their pardon. But at the same time I learned that numerous prelates and Lombard lords, informed of the arrival of the Emperor in Italy, have risen and are making great preparations to receive him in triumph, and put him at the head of a numerous and warlike army. It would seem to me that your Holiness should not pursue the road to Augsburg, but should stop at Canossa, which is a strongly-fortified place, until the intentions of Henry and the Lombards are known."

During this discourse neither Gregory nor Mathilda had broken silence; but when the warrior had ceased speaking, the Pope asked him :

"Sir knight, who art thou ?"

The knight bent one knee to the ground.

"I am," answered he, "Pandolph of Groningen."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PASSAGE OF THE ALPS.

THE winter of 1077 was so rigorous that, properly speaking, there were no longer any rivers beyond the Alps. The harsh and biting north wind had frozen into thick and solid ice the tranquil waters of the lakes and the currents of the rivers. The Danube, the Rhine, the Rhone, the Inn, and all bodies of water, large and small, were frozen so hard that heavy sleds laden with merchandise could cross on them from one shore to the other. Whole squadrons, an entire army, could not have shaken these granite roads. The snow had fallen so long and heavily in the mountains that all the gorges were obstructed. It enveloped, as in a vast shroud, the sides of the rocks and the loftiest peaks, which were glittering with ice.

No traveller would have had the temerity to risk himself on these heights in December or January. The mountaineers themselves, shut up in their warm cabins, dared not quit the chimney-corner to hunt the chamois. Gloom and solitude reigned on those dreary summits, where were heard only the howling of the wind, the crackling of the breaking ice, and the terrible rumbling of the avalanches rolling down the heights like crumbling mountains, to crash with horrible noise into the depths of the valleys. Vapors, mists, the darkness of these desert regions, added to their horrors.

Towards the evening of one of the coldest days, a horseman was seen arriving at Lansleburg, accompanied by a young woman and a little child. Covered with snow, which was falling heavily in great flakes, they shivered and trembled. The horseman was followed by some armed servitors whom he had brought from Burgundy. Like their master and mistress, they were all wrapped to the ears in cloaks of bear or wolf skin. In spite of this, the cold had benumbed them to such a degree that the lady and her child had to be lifted from the saddle.

They entered a little inn and warmed themselves at a cheerful fire, drinking warm milk, whilst preparations were made for the frugal supper which was all this poor hamlet, isolated and half buried in the snow, could offer. After the repast, they lay down around the hearth, wrapped in their cloaks. Next morning, the knight sent for the principal men of the place, and asked them to send him some strong and vigorous young men, for that he wished to cross Mount Cenis and reach Susa before night.

"Neither thee, nor the mountaineers, nor the bears, nor the wolves," they answered him, "could sustain themselves on those heights in such weather as this. Howling storms sweep over the valleys and defiles night and day; masses of snow and avalanches roll down into the abysses, carrying with them all that comes in their way. See yonder those precipices filled with snow, those overloaded peaks, and, far above, those drifts of snow like overhanging clouds; dost thou believe that men could climb those inaccessible heights, brave the shock of the storm, and confront the icy darkness of those black vapors?"

"My horses," replied the traveller, "are shod for ice, and we shall put spikes upon our shoes."

"Well," answered the men of Lansleburg, "seek to gain a foothold on that granite with thy spikes! . . . Thou wouldst slip more easily and with less delay than if thou hadst naught upon thy feet."

"So much the worse!" said the stranger; "for, howsoever it be done, I must be at Susa this evening. I care not for expense, and he who will be my guide shall be liberally rewarded."

This daring knight was King Henry IV., with the Queen and his son Conrad. Every day seemed an age to him which retarded his arrival in Italy, where he might cast himself at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, and be released from the interdict before the year of excommunication should have expired. As we have already said, Henry had left Spire with his family and some followers, and, so as not to fall into the hands of the German princes, he went through Burgundy. At Besançon he received a cordial welcome from Count William, uncle to his mother, the Empress Agnes; he spent the festival of Christmas there, and received from his generous relative money, men, and horses to continue his journey. Having reached the frontiers of the Count de Maurieme, he was unceremoniously informed that he could not pass there, unless he was willing to cede to the Count the vast and rich province of Bugey, with five bishoprics. Henry was filled with rage at such an exaction, but, pressed by circumstances, was forced to consent to it.

How to climb the lofty mountains through the snow, ice, and furious squalls that sweep over their gorges? The King had a litter prepared for his wife and son, and sleds for the baggage; then he ventured upon those gigantic declivities, which he reached with great difficulty, after having lost several horses in the precipices. The journey was long and painful, but, once they had arrived on the summit, the mountaineers who guided the little caravan declared that if the ascent had been hard and difficult, the descent presented insurmountable obstacles.

"In ascending," said they, "we could support ourselves by juttings of the rock, by trunks of trees, even by icicles; but in descending we shall have beneath our feet a sheet of glass, slippery roads, without any support, and bordering on abysses."

The King would not go back. The Queen, pale and trembling, contemplated with mortal terror the steep descents covered with glistening snow and ending in the depths of valleys. The guides lifted her from the litter, and wrapped her and her son in an ox-skin, closed on every side by leathern straps and thongs; then they fastened to it two ropes, one of which served to draw it over the snow, whilst men placed behind moderated with the other the impetuosity of the descent. Henry followed on foot, but was often dashed against icebergs and met with painful falls.

What a sorrowful spectacle to behold a great king reduced to such a miserable extremity! Poor virtuous princess, how much thou wert compelled to suffer, drawn in a leathern sack over snow-covered rocks! How far different from this journey were the triumphal marches of Henry IV. through Germany, surrounded by regal majesty, and receiving the homage of the noblest and most powerful princes of the empire! A fugitive, benumbed with cold, death ever present to his eyes, he deemed himself fortunate to possess the compassion of a few mountaineers. Born to wealth and glory, Henry drew on himself, by his tyranny and impiety, calamities so great that history presents no other example of a prince so humbled by divine Providence.

Meanwhile, the news of Henry's arrival had no sooner reached Lombardy than great agitation manifested itself in the party hostile to the reforms of the saintly Pope. The leaders of it wished to give a triumphal reception to Gregory's bitterest enemy. The ambitious Gilbert had not ceased to be the leader of the simonists and dissolute members of the Lombard clergy; he inflamed the hatred of princes, who had, in despite of all justice, seized on the goods of the Church and put up at auction prelacies and bishoprics. He hastened to send messengers to all the towns and castles of the country, to induce the lords to make large levies of men, so that the Emperor, on arriving in Italy, might find himself at the head of a powerful and devoted army.

But whilst Henry was arriving in Burgundy, Gregory VII. had already retired to Canossa, where the Countess Mathilda extended royal hospitality to him. The first people of Italy, France, Burgundy, Germany, and England repaired thither to offer their homage to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Remarkable among these illustrious guests were the Marchioness Adelaide of Susa, with her son Amadeus Azzo of Este, and the celebrated Hugh of Cluny, with numerous archbishops and bishops who had remained faithful to the Holy Apostolic See, in spite of the general corruption and the dissensions of parties. At sight of so many princes and prelates assembled in the castle, the monk Donizone exclaims, in his rude verse, "that Canossa had become another Rome."

Such wealth, splendor, and solemnity contrasted strangely with the mourning garb of penitents who flocked to Canossa from all parts of Germany, in order to solicit pardon from the Pope and obtain absolution from the censures which they had incurred, whether for simony, for the sacrilegious attempts of the Synod of Worms, or for excesses in which they had been partakers—sharing in the confiscated goods of the Church, retaining in prison the Saxon archbishops and prelates. These converted princes and bishops arrived at Carcassonne after a long and perilous journey across the Germanic Alps, laid down the insignia of their dignity, and repaired to

Canossa, clad in sackcloth, with a rope round their necks, and their heads covered with ashes. There they knelt in the porch for sinners, at the door of the Church of Saint Apollonius, and in a loud voice implored pardon for their crimes. Pope Gregory kindly received these repentant sinners; but as the inveterate habits of sin easily govern the will, the Holy Father obliged the prelates to retire into a cell in the monastery of Canossa, there to appease the divine justice by the mortification of the flesh, by fasting on bread and water, and by continual prayer.

The expiation imposed on the princes and barons who came humbly to confess at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff differed somewhat from that of the prelates. Certain canonical penalties were still in use at that time. We read in Donizone that the Marquis Boniface, father of Mathilda, having conferred some ecclesiastical dignities for money, voluntarily submitted to be scourged, and made a vow to go to the Holy Land. The powerful Emperor Henry III. had his bare shoulders scourged several times as a public expiation for his sins. The proud and haughty monarchs of England, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, after having subdued entire nations, are seen coming to throw themselves, contrite and humble, at the feet of the bishop, confessing to him their cruelties, and imploring of him their pardon. They publicly submitted their bare shoulders to the penitent's lash. Here is, indeed, a fine theme for development on the severity of confessors, and the prayers wherewith they overload their penitents. If things were as they ought to be, the road to Paradise should cease to be narrow, toilsome, thorny—such, in a word, as Jesus Christ depicts it. Why not a good road, broader, smoother, carpeted with flowers and verdure, over which we would proceed surrounded by delights? Why not even journey over the road in a carriage, on good soft cushions? Did not Vincenzo Gioberti cry out upon the house-tops that the penance of the Middle Ages could never accord with the institutions of civil Christianity? If Saint Aloysius Gonzaga had had the good-fortune to live in our days, he might have spared himself many of his disciplines, fasts, and long prayers. Everything in its own time. At that period people imagined that to save one's soul he must have recourse to all these austerities. What folly! Nowadays, human speculations have smoothed the way; people advance with a light and careless step on the road to Paradise; they fly thither along the macadamized paths of civilization, and, with a little further help from progress, they will go there by telegraph, which, it must be admitted, will be a great increase of work for poor Saint Peter, obliged to pull the wires from morning till night. Some journalists are already busying themselves with this troublesome position of Saint Peter's; they would take away from him his golden keys, that the door of heaven might remain open to every comer without porter or doorkeeper; enter who would, without check or passport.

Such is, substantially, the reasoning of many of our moderns. It is therefore natural enough that numberless historians, accustomed to measure antiquity by their own times, should declaim on every occasion against the severity of Gregory VII., which they call cruel and fanatical. But their wrath has to stop there, and can only find vent in more or less swelling phrases. Ah ! if they could come to acts, and scale Paradise, where the Holy Pontiff is reigning in the glory of the elect, they would expel him thence without mercy, and efface his office from the breviary and missal.

Whilst the bishops and princes were coming to express their repentance to Pope Gregory at Canossa, King Henry had arrived at Turin, and found some German barons and several Lombard lords, who were friends of the Emperor and hostile to Gregory and Mathilda, rallying around him.

Henry convoked a parliament, and frankly explained to them his position. He told them that if he were not released from his excommunication before the year had elapsed, he would be irrevocably deposed from all right to the crown. He added that the princes of the empire, assembled at Treuver, in announcing to him this respite, had only conformed to the Germanic right registered in the imperial constitutions. It only remained for him, then, to have recourse to the clemency of the Pope. Immediately his counsellors urged the necessity of sending envoys to the Holy Father and to the Countess Mathilda, his cousin, to announce his arrival, and to seek to conciliate the good graces of that Princess, to whom Gregory was under so many obligations that he would refuse her nothing.

On seeing once more Count Pandolph, her beloved father, Yoland had forgotten her long-continued sorrows. She passed delightful hours at his side, talking over their past misfortunes and the hope of soon seeing their country again.

"Ere I depart for Groningen," said she, "might it not be possible for me to make a visit to the Convent of St. Mary, to embrace my good teachers and receive the blessing of the Abbess Theotberga, who was ever a tender mother to me?"

"My dear child," replied Pandolph, "that would be a most imprudent step. I am aware that the young Marquis, urged by his father and besought by his vassals, has promised to espouse Gisela of Moravia at Pentecost; nevertheless is Ottocar full of anger against me that I did refuse him thy hand, and he might therefore seek to revenge himself. All that we can do is to testify our gratitude to the venerable Abbess by a letter, which will reach her through the Abbot Daufer or the hermit Manfred, to whose friendship and fidelity we are indebted for so many benefits."

On a bright and cheerful morning, enlivened by the rays of a winter sun, Pandolph and his daughter were conversing together on their plans for the future, as they walked at the base of the mountains which extend from the fort of Canossa to that of Rossena. All at once they saw coming towards them the young Oswald of Thuringia, mounted on a handsome palfrey, which he managed with perfect grace. He was a brave and amiable prince, full of knowledge and piety, and whose brilliant education and noble qualities were only surpassed by his modesty. He had arrived at the court of Mathilda, his kinswoman, about a month previous, and had quickly gained the esteem and affection of every one. As he issued from a cluster of oaks, Yoland, engaged in talking animatedly, did not at first perceive him. The young man advanced at a gallop, his hair flowing over his shoulders in the German fashion. Recognizing Yoland and her father, he slackened his pace and saluted them respectfully. Pandolph said to his daughter:

"This young Prince would seem to me an accomplished knight. His distinguished manners are not eclipsed by any of the numberless Italian, French, or German youths who are the ornament of Mathilda's court, which contains the flower of Christian gentlemen. Being thrown into his company on many occasions, amongst others on that of our journey from Lucca to Canossa, I judge him to be of a noble nature. He is modest, reserved, valiant, and endeared to me by his unfailing devotion to the Sovereign Pontiff. I am well persuaded that in his defence he would shed the last drop of his blood."

"Father," replied Yoland, "thou hast judged aright; for the Pope loves him much and holds him in high esteem—to such degree, in truth, that but lately he told the Marquis of Este that 'the young Landgrave had shown such valor in arms and a heart so full of faith that he had written to his father in Thuringia, wishing him joy in the possession of such a son, the faithful and valiant champion of the Church and the empire.' "

"At which I do exceedingly rejoice," replied Pandolph, feigning a careless air. "I bethink me, too, that Oswald has great love for music; for, whilst thou didst yestereve accompany the beautiful anthem of the Pope, in presence of the Marchioness of Susa and the Countess Mathilda, his eyes, as I chanced to perceive, were fixed upon thine instrument, as though, in truth, his heart and soul were hung upon thy harp-strings."

Yoland reddened. She knew not that some days previous the young Landgrave had asked her hand, and that Pandolph had held a long conference on this subject with Mathilda, who had taken it upon her to write to Oswald's father. The young Prince, who admired in Yoland her elevated mind, united with the sweet and most gentle attributes of a pure and candid soul, opened his heart to Mathilda, without even knowing of Yoland's high birth. But when the Countess had secretly confided to him that the young girl was the Countess of Groningen, he resolved to hasten his union with so accomplished a person.

Mathilda had, however, forborne to speak of it to the young girl; but at length Pandolph arrived at Canossa, and then she disclosed to him Oswald's intentions, which he had besought her to present as a formal demand, even before the lady should be informed of his suit.

The father and daughter continued their walk to the foot of the high rock which forms the base of the Castle of Rossena. They paused to contemplate, from that height, the course of the Enza, whose limpid waters, winding in and out through the whole range of the Apennines, fertilize the beautiful valley of Selva Piana. It was amid these enchanting scenes that Petrarch, having built himself an elegant retreat, came to pass the summer in this sweet solitude beneath its refreshing shade. Thence could be descried the domes of Bismantova, with their girdle of fortified castles, overlooking a vast plain, cultivated fields, gloomy forests, swamps, rural scenes, in which horses paced or the deer—in which the country abounded—leaped and sported. Amazed at the charming landscape which stretched before him, Pandolph wished to ascend as far as the first courtyard of Rossena, where the warriors of the Countess invited him to rest.

Built by Mathilda, or perhaps by the Marquis Boniface, her father, the Castle of Rossena still exists. It stands isolated on the summit of a steep rock whose flanks are bordered on either side by precipices. The walls rise from height to height to the very pinnacle of the rock, and the turrets rise into the air, as if defying wind and storm. On the descent, the iron-like rock descends perpendicularly into a deep valley; high peaks crown its base, resting on narrow and irregular ledges, which seem to descend gradually from point to point down to the very bottom of the precipice. Seen from the torrent of Cianello, Rossena appears like an inaccessible retreat, whose top is lost in the clouds which float round it like a veil of mist. This is perhaps the steepest rock in all the mountain chains which traverse Italy.

On the southern declivity of the rock are four crenelated walls, resting on projections of the rock, and crowned on their highest pinnacle by a square tower which rises upward slender and graceful. A door provided with a portcullis gives entrance to the first court, separated from the second by steps hewn in the rock, above which is crossed, by a drawbridge, a deep abyss. All passages connecting one court with another are cut in the rock itself, and barricaded with portcullis, gratings, and traps, so that, one court being forced, an entrenchment could be made in a higher one.

Above the fortifications arose the castle proper, the dwelling of the lord. It was divided into vast compartments, with halls, chambers, vaulted corridors, cellars, and terraces. In the time of Mathilda, and doubtless for several centuries after, the apartments were still adorned and furnished with royal luxury, but now can be seen only its remains. From the four façades there is a magnificent view. One is taken with vertigo when leaning over the balconies, projections, or the little gardens hanging over the abyss in whose depth is hidden the base of the mountain. Rossena is the bulwark of Canossa on the side of the Enza; it is an impregnable fortress. It would be necessary to borrow the wings of the eagle or the hawk to dream of making an assault upon it or taking it by surprise.

After having visited Rossena, Pandolph and his daughter went down from rock to rock, taking the road which led to Canossa. As they were ascending the first heights of the latter fortress, they saw at some distance, but hastening in that direction, a numerous and brilliant troop of horsemen. Yoland and her father quickened their steps, and the young girl went up to her apartments, the balcony of which gazed out on the court which the horsemen would have to cross. They all wore light breastplates of burnished steel, waving plumes, coats-of-arms of various colors, and a cloak of tissue of gold embroidered in azure thrown over their shoulders; they rode with visor raised, followed by numerous esquires and pages gorgeously arrayed in their masters' colors.

Yoland was pleased with the sight of their manly and warlike faces, as they passed in review, and the imposing train, which she soon recognized as being an embassy of the great barons of Germany. All at once her father, who was standing behind her, saw her turn pale, shrink back, and move tremblingly into the centre of the room.

"What aileth thee, my child?" cried he.

These were the ambassadors of Henry, charged to announce his arrival to the Pope and the Countess Mathilda. The train was composed of Lombard and German knights who had remained faithful to the fortunes of the King. They had with great difficulty crossed the rude valleys of Chamouni, of the Grisons, and of Splugen, braving the snow and intense cold, which continued in all its rigor. At length they had come into Italy, carefully avoid-ing the ambuscades which Guelph of Bavaria and Berthold of Carinthia had placed in all the passes of the Alps. They had rejoined Henry at Turin and Vercelli, whence he had sent them as envoys to the Pope, with full confidence in their experience, eloquence, and skill in the management of affairs. To the younger was entrusted the task of winning the confidence of the princes assembled at Canossa by their elegant manners and their courteous and affable demeanor.

Seeing his daughter so agitated, Pandolph questioned her closely; she answered in a feeble and broken voice:

"Ah! father, I recognized amongst these knights the author of all my misfortunes—the Marquis of Brunn!"

"Calm thyself, my child," said Pandolph; "thou wert the sport of some illusion, some fancied resemblance. . . ."

"O father! it is he in truth!" replied Yoland. "I knew him readily amongst all the train; his esquire bears the banner of Brunn. If he has not perceived me, all is well; but I tremble with fear. . . ."

Pandolph promised her to speak of it to Bishop Anselm and the Abbot of Cluny. He likewise recommended her to apprise the Countess Mathilda of it, and to leave her own apartments as little as possible. He besought her, above all, to avoid manifesting the slightest emotion, and to preserve her customary serenity in conversing with the damsels and gentlemen of the court.

Two days after this incident the bridge of the outer court was lowered to give passage to a horseman followed by his esquire. He galloped down the road to Ciano, crossed the Enza at a little bridge which the frost had rendered slippery, and began to ascend the eminence of Varvassone, another of Mathilda's domains, whose strong fortress defended the passage of the river. As the knight rode along in silence, absorbed in his own reflections, the esquire spoke :

"My lord, I think, or at least it would seem to me, that I recognized the damsel of the Convent of Brunn."

The knight quickly raised his head with a start of surprise :

"Thou art a fool," said he, pursuing his road.

"Fool an it please thee," replied the other, "but I would swear it was she ; she was looking out on a balcony of the palace, and watching thee attentively crossing the court with the other ambassadors. She is taller, but her features have not changed. I saw her a hundred times at Brunn, when she played in the park or courts of the convent."

"And thinkest thou she perceived me ?"

"I cannot declare that she did, but I know that there was a prince beside her, with whom she conversed familiarly. When the cavalcade was near the palace, she quickly drew in her head and disappeared."

"Ah ! that is wherefore the Countess despatched me in such haste to bear to the King the conditions which the Pope imposed on him! Well, I am not Ottocar of Brunn if I return not to Canossa in other guise than that of an ambassador! And, furthermore, the conditions are not acceptable; the Pope, who suspects that Henry only takes this step under pressure of the threats of the German lords, lest he see himself deposed from the throne, exacts in the first place that, as a proof of the sincerity of his repentance, he sends him the crown and sceptre, and declares himself unworthy of the imperial power. . . . Thinkest thou that the pride of the Emperor will submit to such a humiliation? He is even now surrounded by a number of faithful princes; he beholds the Lombards risen in his favor; a powerful Italian army is ready to defend him. He will quit Turin, show himself to his troops, lead them over the Enza, march upon Canossa, to surprise the castle in the midst of the festivities, and make himself master of it in less time than it takes to tell it. I would climb those rocks, scale those haughty walls; for I would be the first to plant Henry's standard on its towers. I would set fire to the palace, strangle the Pope and the old Countess who protects him, and Yoland would be in my power. . . . I swear . . ."

"Swear not," interrupted his esquire; "such oaths often fall upon the head of those who make them."

Ottocar made a gesture of anger and spurred his horse, taking refuge in a disdainful silence.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TOMB OF BEATRICE.

LAST year, after leaving Lucca, where I had revisited the cathedral church of Saint Michael, founded by the Countess Mathilda, and still existing to-day in all its beauty as a perpetual memorial of her lofty and religious genius, I proceeded to Pisa to visit the tomb of the Countess Beatrice, mother of that Princess, who was the glory of Italy. Beatrice, whose every faculty was placed at the service of the Holy See, who alone upheld the destiny of Italy in those difficult times, rests in a beautiful marble mausoleum, an antique masterpiece of a Grecian chisel.

It was a September morning. I was walking under the long arches of the Campo Santo of Pisa, on the flags of which a glowing sun cast the dark shadow of long, slender pilasters which adorn the circumference of the enclosure. I stopped at every step before some beautiful picture of Giotto, Buffalmacco, and other masters of the Tuscan school. On arriving at the cloisters in front of the entrance door, I perceived a large marble urn, before which stood a small catafalque draped in purple velvet; at the four corners of it were candelabras containing lighted tapers. The keeper accompanied me. I asked him of what noble Pisan, lately deceased, were they celebrating the obsequies.

"Father," said he, "there are no more burials in the Campo Santo, but the canons of the cathedral are keeping the anniversary of the Countess Beatrice, mother of Mathilda of Canossa, who endowed the chapter in the eleventh century. Very soon now, after the Requiem Mass, they will come here with tapers to give the absolution."

"Is it possible that after eight hundred years the Church of Pisa still preserves the memory of that lady?"

"Undoubtedly," replied my guide. "I am now old, and as long as I can remember I have seen every year the canons coming in procession to this monument to celebrate the office of the dead and a Solemn Mass, and drape this catafalque, as though Beatrice had died but yesterday."

I examined the beautiful *basso-rilievo* of the shrine; it bears this rude and humble epitaph: "Quamvis peccatrix, sum domna vocata Beatrix; in tumulo missa jaceo quæ comitissa."*

I left the Campo Santo and entered the baptistry, where I seated myself on a bench, and began to reflect on the glory which outlives, even in this world, the children of the Church. On the death of those who are dear to it, the world, even while it weeps, seeks the jewels, gold, objects of value, or lands and houses which the deceased may have left.

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* "Though I be a sinner, my name is Lady Beatrice; I lie in the tomb—I who was a countess."

It hastens to bury him, enjoy the fruits of its succession, and the next day it thinks no more of him whom it buried the evening before. Often even it forgets the name of the grandfather or uncle who has made the fortune of the head of the family.

It is not thus with those who enrich the Church. They live in her immortality. Partaking in the liberality and goodness of God, she renders, even in this world, to her benefactors the reward which God assures them a hundredfold in heaven. The mortal triumphs of the greatest monarchs pass away, and their magnificent tombs pass with them. But the names which the gratitude of the Church has inscribed in her golden book are effaced neither by the vicissitudes of time, nor political changes, nor the ravages of war. Often illustrious families become extinct, but their name is perpetuated, brilliant and radiant, in the archives of the Church. Rome alone offers us a striking confirmation of this fact. The great and powerful houses of Cesi, Farnese, Ludovici, Pamphili, Peretti, are extinct. Nevertheless, Cardinal Cesi still lives in the Church of the Vallicella, Cardinal Farnese in that of the Gesù, Cardinal Ludovici in that of Saint Ignatius, Cardinal Pamphili in that of Saint Agnes and San Andrea at the Quirinal, and Cardinal Peretti in San Andrea della Valle. Every year they have a memorial service for them, and their names resound, living and glorious, beneath these gorgeous domes, the monuments of their piety. It is the same with hosts of others who live only by their munificence to the Church, while death has consigned to oblivion their relatives and equals, oftentimes richer, wiser, more magnificent than those whose pious largesses have immortalized their memory.

If, in place of persecuting the Church, Henry IV. had protected, honored, and defended it, his name would still to-day be as honored, as glorious, as those of Charlemagne and of Henry II., his holy predecessor. But, misled by pride and avarice, he sought to crush the Church with the weight of his tyranny and cruelty. Therefore, his name is rarely uttered, and never without a feeling of disgust and abhorrence. His unhonored grave was forgotten by his very flatterers. If he had, at least, repented of his faults, the Church, that divine mother, would have raised him from his debasement, and placed him so high that the noblest kings in Christendom would have envied him such glory. For there is glory in humbling one's self before God. God is pleased to raise the humble to heights the most sublime, even to the throne of his divine majesty. David and Theodosius the Great acknowledged this truth; therefore God encircled them with immortal glory.

The ambassadors sent to Canossa by Henry used all their efforts to obtain his release from the sentence of excommunication before the term appointed by the Palatine laws and the intimation of the Diet. But the Pope answered that he must at least debate the cause with the German princes. "I would judge it little in conformity with the laws of justice and the customs of the Roman Church to decide before I have heard both parties. The princes who accused the king at my tribunal are to sit at Augsburg, whither they have invited me. Let Henry appear there, free to justify himself of the crimes which they impute to him, and I will judge his cause. No one is more anxious than I to find him innocent. I would bless Heaven, and all the faithful would applaud my decision."

The ambassadors replied that the German princes, subjects of Henry, could not judge their master.

"They will not judge him," replied the Pope. "They accuse him of having despised the constitutions of the empire, and they have the right so to do; for the King of the Romans is only raised to the throne by the suffrage of the electoral princes, with the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff, who gave the empire of the Franks to Charlemagne. Hereditary thrones are not upon the same conditions as elective kingdoms. There royalty is held by nature; here by suffrage. If the accusations brought against Henry be unfounded, glory be to God! May Henry reign in triumph!"

If the antagonists of the Holy See loyally took account of this distinction, they would not so often declaim, rightly or wrongly, against pontifical audacity, which arrogated to itself the right to depose kings who persisted in violating the fundamental compact which they had sworn to observe at their election.

The ambassadors, embarrassed by this irrefutable logic, made an appeal to the clemency of the Pope; but Gregory answered very judiciously that mercy must give place to justice.

Meanwhile, the Countess Mathilda was taking an active part in these negotiations. King Henry was her cousin, and his Queen was the daughter of the Marchioness of Susa, whom she dearly loved. The Abbot of Cluny had held Henry, his godson, at the baptismal font, and the princes and great barons who dwelt at Canossa could not help, in spite of being Catholics, loving Henry on account of his chivalrous and valiant character. There Mathilda frequently visited the Holy Father, recommending Henry to him, and interceding in his favor. But the saints, in all their acts, never lose sight of God ; and when conscience is in question, they remain as unshaken as the rock. Hugh and Anselm, both holy men, united their entreaties to those of Mathilda. But Gregory replied by arguments so well founded that they could make no reply.

"Tell me, then, Hugh," said the Pope, "wherefore did Henry refuse to appear and justify himself at the Diet ? Wherefore came he to seek me in Italy, when I, on the other hand, was proceeding to Germany ?"

"Holy Father," replied the Abbot of Cluny, "Henry has so many enemies there they would pitilessly overwhelm him."

"But," responded Gregory, "did he have pity on the Saxons, Thuringians, and Suabians ? Besides, it is not true that they are all his enemies. Thou knowest how many princes, bishops, and archbishops were of his party, favoring his excesses either through negligence or interest. Now they are obliged to add their voices to those of Treuver, because his crimes have passed all bounds."

"But, your Holiness," said Anselm, "pardon the King's youth, the violence of his passions, the evil education he received, the counsels of the wicked, the alluring temptations which caused him to fall from abyss to abyss. A tender father like thee will have pity on the errors of thy son."

"Ay would I indeed!" replied Gregory. "But must the eye of justice ever remain blind? If clemency takes pity on the erring, justice should scrutinize and judge severely, in spite of prayers and tears. Henry regards the Church as his slave; he sells her to the first wretch who offers him gold or silver. Glance at all the churches in Germany which have been vacant since his coming to the throne; is there a single one of them which has not a wolf for a pastor? They carried them by violence, and, when they could not scale the windows, they pierced the walls, to enter by the breach. Can human clemency be invoked in favor of one who has so audaciously despised the eternal rights of justice?"

"But he crossed the Alps, humble and contrite, and he comes to ask thy pardon!" said Hugh and Anselm warmly.

"If he be truly repentant," replied Gregory, "let him send me his insignia of royalty—the sceptre and the crown—and confess in writing all the crimes which he committed against the Almighty, as well as his tyranny against the people of Germany. We shall then see what God will inspire us to do; for, in spite of his excesses, we have never ceased to regard him as our very dear son."

In consequence of this interview of the Abbot Hugh, Bishop Anselm, and the ambassadors with Gregory, Mathilda charged Ottocar to bear to Henry the response of the Pope, secretly praying the King in her message not to send that messenger again to her court.

Whilst Ottocar was riding up the hill of Varvassone like a madman, forming a thousand plans to take a signal revenge for the affront which Yoland had offered him, a mendicant came down from the castle, clad in rags, and her head enveloped in an old woollen covering which almost entirely concealed her face. Her eyes, bright and piercing, were fixed even at a distance upon the warrior, and, having attentively regarded him, she stopped and awaited him.

"Hail to the Lord of Brunn," said she when he came near her.

Ottocar, astonished to hear himself addressed in the Moravian tongue, stopped.

"What! is it thou, Swatiza?" cried he. "What art thou doing here?"

"My lord," answered she, "because of a little visit which I made to the sacristy of the Cathedral of Würzburg, the bishop banished me and promised a thousand marks to whoever would give me up, dead or alive. We had concealed all the gold and silver of our booty in a castle burned during the war, where coiners pursued their trade.

"It chanced that we kept prisoner a certain Raymond, an old servant of Pandolph, father of Yoland. I took pity on him. I resolved to withdraw him from his pitiable position, and place him in safety. We passed out by a subterranean passage opening on the valley, and Raymond, having crossed the stream, climbed the other bank. I watched him; all at once I saw him conceal himself behind a large oak, and sign to me to follow him. Not knowing what he wished, I remained motionless. Then he lay down on the ground and crawled a little nearer to the bank, calling: 'Save thyself, Swatiza! Cross the stream and hide. There is a large detachment of Bavarians approaching the castle, and surrounding it on all sides.' At these words I rushed from the postern into the middle of the stream, and crawled into a thicket of brushwood. I rejoined Raymond, whom I had delivered, and who thus became my liberator. It seems that Duke Guelph of Bavaria, having learned from his spies that there were coiners in the old castle, fell upon them unexpectedly, and all were arrested, as I afterwards learned. Their treasure was seized, and they were hung on the spot. Fortunately, I had gold about me, and it came in well during my journey. Raymond left me to rejoin his master at Boleslau. As for me, being somewhat uneasy there, I set out towards Italy. I crossed Lombardy, plying my trade, and now I am going to Canossa, whither the Pope's visit has attracted numbers of people. I will tell them good fortunes, and may thus be enabled to live for some time."

Ottocar, who had heard this prolix history with much impatiénce, cut her short.

"I believe it is the demon who sends thee," said he. "Knowest thou where Yoland is? Divine it, if thou canst, and I will give thee thousands."

"At Rome, for I met her in the old castle. She had fallen into the hands of the coiners, and I helped her to escape some days before the surprise. She was disguised as a pilgrim, and was repairing to Rome, whither she must have arrived. Doubtless she placed herself under the protection of the Empress Agnes, the refuge and the providence of all German pilgrims."

"No, she is at Canossa with the Countess Mathilda. Albert," said he, addressing his esquire, "go on before, and await me at the gate of Varvassone."

He alighted, took Swatiza by the hand, and said:

"Thou art not worthy of thy name if thou aidst me not to take revenge on this girl, who plays with me as though I were a lackey, and has made me a by-word among all the lords of the country. She must no longer have power to baffle me so cruelly. She has despised me, mocked me, to-day at the court of Canossa! . . . This thought makes her odious to me. I hate her even unto death, and I shall not have an hour's rest till the wretch be humbled. Thou shouldst know how to do away with her—fire, poison, poignard, all are good. And if thou shouldst succeed, thou shalt no longer beg; I will secure thee bread for thine old age. Bring me to Brunn the news of her death, and I will give thee thy weight in gold."

"To Brunn? Gramercy, good lord! That so I might be thrown into the water or roasted on the Hungarian Square? . . . I am not such a simpleton! I escaped thither once, and I made my parting bow to Brunn. . . . They will not see me there again."

"It matters not! Provided that thou kill her, I shall find means to send thee all the gold thou wouldst. To work, then, dear friend! If thou canst gain over some attendant of the Countess, give her a drop of those poisons that thou knowest, and which, mixed with food or drink, cause a slow but certain death. Thou shalt have time to leave the country ere they have the slightest suspicion."

"Meanwhile, Marquis, open thy purse and give me a good handful of gold marks on account, so that I can appear at Canossa without being forced to beg my bread."

Ottocar plunged his hand into his purse, and drew thence several pieces of gold, which he gave to the gypsy; then, remounting his horse, he continued his journey to the King, who anxiously awaited the Pope's reply.

On her arrival at Canossa, Swatiza took lodging in a little inn outside the third court of the fortress. She laid aside her rags, combed her long, jet-black hair, and divided it into two long tresses, according to the fashion of the gypsies. She then donned a tunic of taffeta which was profusely spangled and threaded with gold, with sleeves in the form of wings floating from her shoulders, and giving her the air of a variegated butterfly. She sallied forth in this garb, installed herself in the square, mounted on a stool, and blew on a little trumpet a wild and fantastic air. At this unusual noise the people ran thither from all parts, and encircled the stranger, asking her what she meant by this strange music. When Swatiza saw that she had an attentive audience, she began to speak in most grotesque Sclavo-Lombard jargon.

"People of Canossa," said she, "I come from Herminia, a country far from here, where the moon rises by day and the sun by night; where men have two heads, one of which looks before, the other behind. There women have whiskers like cats; in place of our steeds men are mounted on sea-lions as large as elephants. Gold is as common as stone is here, and in place of water the seas run wine; there grains of wheat are pearls, and people are fed on bread made with this meal, which is perfumed and sweet as the breath of spring. I can tell you I have taken time to come hither from Herminia; it is a seven years' journey! I have worn out two hundred and thirty pairs of sandals with double soles and triple leather. What an interminable way! Yet the fame of your valor and courtesy has spread over the entire world, and induced me to come hither to see you, to admire the grandeur of these palaces and the magnificence of the Countess's court. But think not that I have come hither empty-handed; I would show you what we do in Herminia, where fire is drunk like water, where tow and hog's bristles are eaten, and, being well digested or elaborated by the stomach, furnish entire pieces of ribbon of the most beautiful tint."

The people listened and waited breathlessly. Swatiza took a handful of tow, which she put in her mouth, puffed out her cheeks, and sent out a kind of thick smoke, which issued from her lips in bluish wreaths. Soon also sparks came out of the smoke, and at length a long flame, bright and glowing. She turned to the spectators and sent in their faces tongues of flame, which made them draw back in affright. There was general consternation. They said :

"Behold ! one would think it the mouth of an oven. That creature is of iron ; her mouth is full of fire, smoke, and sparks. Her palate is lined with brass !"

Whilst these comments were being made around her, Swatiza took from a lighted chafing-dish an iron spoon full of melted lead.

"After having vomited all this flame," said she, "I may well be thirsty. Ye drink cold water or wine, but in Herminia we quench our thirst in melted lead. Now, then, give me a glass. . . ."

And raising it in sight of all the people, she poured out the liquid metal, and brought it to her lips.

"No, no, do not drink !" cried the crowd with one voice.

But the gypsy, who had emptied the glass at a mouthful, rinsed her mouth and spit the marvellous liquid into the vessel.

"Did I not tell ye?" cried she. "That is well worth a glass of cold water!"

And at the same time she opened her mouth to show them that it remained perfectly unharmed. The crowd remained perfectly stupefied.

Then Swatiza resumed:

"You have just seen how they drink in Herminia. I will now show you how they eat."

She took balls of tow, put them in her mouth, and began to chew with wonderful relish. The spectators laughed. She rolled her eyes and chewed with grotesque contortions. Sometimes she seemed as if about to choke, struck her chest, and pinched her throat; finally she swallowed the tow. All the assistants laughed and danced with joy at seeing these feats of jugglery. Then Swatiza began to wriggle and make convulsive efforts; then, raising her fingers to her mouth, she pulled out a red ribbon.

"Behold! she has eaten tow and draws out a beautiful satin ribbon. How does she perform such wonders?"

And Swatiza drew and drew, till she displayed thirty yards of satin of all shades—green, yellow, blue, white, pink, and red.

The enthusiasm had reached its height. The crowd was like a surging sea. The gypsy again spoke with a sprightly air and a smile on her lips:

"Scissors!" cried she.

They were given to her, and she began to cut the ribbon, and, waving it in the air, she said:

"Come, young damsels, this is for you."

Many cheeks grew crimson, many heads were bent, and there was a long pause; for all feared to be singled out by the terrible sorceress, and no one advanced. Then Swatiza, seeing in the crowd a handsome youth in the livery of the palace, called out to him:

"Approach, gentle page! This ribbon is for thee; thou shalt give it to whom thou wilt."

The page advanced, and, whilst Swatiza gave him the ribbon, she quickly whispered in his ear:

"Come presently to the inn; I will tell thee thy fortune."

When Swatiza saw that all the people were amazed at her prowess, she opened a wallet which she wore slung over her shoulder, blew some notes on her horn, looked round her, and continued:

"Inhabitants of Canossa, ye are the most fortunate of all the nations of Western Christendom. Ye dwell in an impregnable fortress whose halls have witnessed the defeat of more than one king or emperor. Ye possess the most splendid court ever seen by men. Ye are governed by a princess who desires not the title of queen, and who is above the most illustrious empresses. Even to-day ye venerate within your walls the Sovereign Pontiff, who holds the keys of Paradise, surrounded by a brilliant circle of cardinals, bishops, archbishops, and patriarchs. To honor him the greatest Christian princes have flocked within your walls, and your days are but a succession of festivals, of pomp, and of triumph. Citizens of Canossa, your lot is envied everywhere. At Bagdad, at Golconda, at Trebizonde, in Palestine, yea, even in the Mountains of the Moon and the Golden Mountains, the country of griffins and of dragons, ye are spoken of. I was, as I have told you, in Herminia, and, dazzled by the glory of your name, I came and I desired to see you. I learned the healing art from the Great Mogul, and I know the secrets of life and death. My master was the most wise (here she bowed her head profoundly) Caïmakadenriculikan—a name venerated throughout the East. He knows the influence of the stars and the destiny of every man; he knows the hidden virtues of plants, flowers, fruits, metals, and stones. Death dares not slay him; he has already lived seven thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and is still as hale and hearty as a young man. Citizens of Canossa, this man loves me as a daughter; he has taught me the deep mysteries of nature, which has furnished me with means to compose an admirable powder."

So saying, she drew from her pouch some small packets filled with brick-dust.

"Here is the elixir of a long life. Ye must infuse this powder into three drops of very clear spring-water; it will cure ye of headache, colic, vertigo, asthma, buzzing in the ear, fever, catarrh, and gout. In the great cities of Perettola and Montelupo, where the Sultans of Canisgatte hold their grand levees, I sold one of these packets for ten gold besants; but they were pagans. To ye, who are Christians, I will give them for a trifle. . . . Thirty farthings? That will be little. Twenty? That is nothing. . . . Ten? I am too kind. . . Well, yes, for ten farthings. Come, help yourselves, noble citizens of Canossa, for ten farthings! for ten farthings!"

She had not finished speaking when a great crowd pressed round the gypsy, who took care not to let go of the precious paper before she held the money in her hand. "Is it good for sciatica? Excellent! For colic? Splendid!" To be brief, she was relieved of all her parcels in an instant, and received a good sum of money.

She entered the inn to rest a little, when the page came. They retired to an empty room, and Swatiza, having opened the young man's hand and examined all the lines, said:

"Fair youth, thou hast famous luck. I read in thy hand happy omens. What is thy name?"

"Isnard," replied the youth:

"Then, dear Isnard, take heart; and if thou dost assist me, I will assure thee of a generous reward. Tell me, hast seen in the palace a certain damsel of great beauty named Yoland?"

"She has been with us for a long time," responded Isnard, "and her beauty is nothing to her goodness and generosity. . . . I am the godson of her falconer, and I can tell thee that she has not her equal for virtue, and our serene highness loves her like a daughter. It was not known for long whence they came; but on his way to Lucca the Pope met with a great lord who is the father of Yoland."

"Verily!" interrupted Swatiza; "and know they who he is?"

"He has himself told them. The Pope and the Countess Mathilda received him with great demonstrations as a great and valiant prince, persecuted by the Emperor because he defended the Holy Father Gregory. In short, he is named Pandolph of Groningen."

"And Yoland is his daughter? Is she as yet betrothed to any prince?"

"Ah! that is still a secret; it is whispered that she will one day espouse the noble Landgrave of Thuringia, the eldest son of the old Landgrave and heir to a vast principality. But it is hard to know."

"Dost know if the betrothal has yet taken place?"

"Ginevra, the sister of the young falconer Vidbode, who is in the service of her most serene highness our mistress, knows that they are only awaiting the letters from the old Landgrave; on their arrival the Pope will unite the youthful pair at the altar of Saint Apollonius, under the auspices of the Countess Mathilda and the Marquis Azzo d'Este. Ginevra said—in strict confidence be it understood—to her brother that the Emperor of Constantinople has already sent the wedding presents, consisting of several large cases of fine Indian and Persian stuffs, and that Yoland's bridal train will be the fairest ever seen. Orders have been sent to Venice for a great quantity of precious stones for crowns, diadems, collars, and ornaments, and the most skilful workmen of Milan, Verona, and Pisa are expected, that the nuptials may be royally sumptuous and magnificent."

"All the better," said the gypsy. "I hope to profit the more by it. Isnard, thou must seek to see the noble damsel, and say to her: 'She who promised thee, in Bavaria, to free Raymond from the old castle has served thee faithfully, and he is now at the shrine of Our Lady of Boleslau.' Thou must add that I desire to see and have speech with her an instant, to warn her of a great danger which threatens her."

At this moment there suddenly entered a corporal of justice and six archers armed with halberds. They seized poor Swatiza without a word, put her in fetters, and threw her into the deepest dungeon of the castle. Whilst she was swallowing the melted lead on the square, to the great amazement of the crowd, some of Ottocar's pages recognized and denounced her as the most accursed witch in all Germany. They also declared that she had come to poison the Pope or work some terrible spell. The people, seeing her pass in chains, said:

"She must be a great sorceress, for she drinks fire and rinses her mouth with it, and eats tow, which she changes to silk ribbons. Let her trial come off quickly; let her feel the fire."

There were then at Canossa many German lords, who related all that they knew of the thefts, stratagems, and magic of which she was accused in Germany. The magistrate at once condemned her to the gallows.

At length Isnard, through the mediation of Ginevra, was enabled to send her message to Yoland. The young girl at once recollected her as being the Swatiza who had delivered her from the hands of the brigands. As soon as she learned that she had been cast into the dungeon of the tower, which communicated with the palace by a secret passage, she went down thither that evening and found the poor gypsy loaded with chains. At the sound of footsteps Swatiza was much disturbed, thinking that the executioner had come to strangle her. But hearing a sweet voice which said, "It is Yoland, my good Swatiza," she began to cry.

"Aid me, my lady, I beseech thee! Know that I wish to converse with thee of a secret which threatens thy life. The Marquis Ottocar learned that thou wert here through his esquire, who recognized thee on the balcony; and meeting me on the hill of Varvassone, he promised me a thousand marks of gold if I would poison thee. Having reached Canossa, I amused the people with my jugglery, drinking before their eyes melted lead, which was really only mercury, when I perceived Isnard, a page of the court, whom I charged to bear thee a message. My intention was to reveal the Marquis's plot, in order to put thee on thy guard. I say not this, believe me, that I may be released from my chains and my life spared. . . . Oh! no. God is witness that I desired only to serve thee!"

Yoland then said, without being at all disturbed: "Swatiza, I thank thee for thy good-will. I will take every precaution not to fall into his snare. As for thee, take courage and hope. Yet I must warn thee of one thing : if the Countess Mathilda should show thee mercy, it is understood that thou must return to God. It is time that thou shouldst enter into thyself. Repent sincerely of thy faults, confessing them with great contrition to the holy Abbot Hugh of Cluny, who will give thee absolution. Consider, therefore, that, even if I obtain mercy for thee from the Countess, as I hope, I will not ask thy liberty if thou wilt again commence to do evil."

"My lady," interrupted Swatiza, "if thou savest me from the block, I swear to God and thee to lead a penitent life to my last day."

"Well," replied Yoland, "there is on the highest crests of the Apennines a refuge for penitents, where they lead a pious and solitary life. I will pray the Countess to find thee a place therein."

Whilst Swatiza pressed Yoland's hand with rapture, and kissed it, moistening it with her tears, a sound of footsteps was heard in the subterranean passage. Immediately there appeared the executioner, preceded by two men bearing lighted torches. He held in his hand a silken cord and a short stick.

"What would you ?" asked Yoland.

Recognizing the princess, he drew back and replied :

"My lady, the magistrate, in order that the festivities of the court be not interrupted, has decided that, in place of being hung, the witch should be strangled in her prison. I come to execute the sentence."

Then Yoland said:

"Executioner, I forbid thee to touch this woman. Go tell the magistrate that he must appear to-morrow before the Countess Mathilda."

CHAPTER XXI.

HENRY IV. AT CANOSSA.

The mountains of Reggio were covered with a thick fall of snow. The winter continued intensely cold, and the fierce and icy winds from the north swept howling over the plains and elevations of Lombardy. The Castle of Canossa arose from the dazzling whiteness of the snow which lay on all the surrounding heights. Its stern and solitary pinnacle and its gloomy walls made it seem, from the depths of the valleys, like an eagle's nest resting on the summit of the rock. That steep rock was then the retreat of the august Vicar of Jesus Christ and a multitude of sovereign princes. Canossa had become the most brilliant metropolis in the world.

From the high towers and long, narrow windows of Mathilda's palace could be seen, on the severe morning of the 23d of January, a young man advancing painfully through the snow, his head bare and his hair in disorder. He wore a garment of coarse linen, fastened at the waist with a rope, and walking barefoot.

Having reached the first court, he knocked at the gate. The porter raised the portcullis, and led him into the second court; there the drawbridge was raised above the steep edge of the moat. "Open!" cried the pilgrim. Just then a heavy snow was falling, mingled with small icicles, hard and cutting, which the wind drove in the traveller's face. He called a second time and in a louder tone before the bridge was lowered. Then the heavy machine moved downward on its chains, but only to give passage to the pilgrim. Those who accompanied him were obliged to remain without.

To pass from the second to the third court the traveller was obliged to knock repeatedly, but received no answer. He took a stone and knocked on the large nails of the gate, making a tremendous noise. At this sound a soldier, looking through a loop-hole, said:

"Who is there?"

"Open, I pray thee," said the pilgrim; "hasten, ere I die of cold!"

"Whom dost thou seek?"

"I seek the Pope, the Countess, and the Marchioness of Susa; descend and open! . . ."

"I shall not descend," replied the soldier roughly. "Who art thou?

"I am Henry, King of the Romans, son-in-law of Adelaide of Susa, and cousin of the Countess Mathilda, thy mistress. Come down, or I will have thee hung on these battlements."

The soldier ran straightway to the castle to announce King Henry. The Countess Mathilda hastened at once to Pope Gregory, and, kneeling at his feet, said in a supplicating tone:

"Holy Father, the greatest King of Christendom, without awaiting the result of the negotiations pending with his ambassadors, comes thither in person to prostrate himself at the feet of your Holiness. The soldier tells me he is there barefoot, clad in a coarse garment, girded with a rope, and with uncovered head. And behold, Holy Father, the snow is falling, the icy wind howls in the mountain gorges, and the cold is severe and rigorous. . . . Have pity on this poor wanderer, who, returning to himself, comes to implore thy mercy."

"Returning to himself!" said the Pope. "Countess, thou in very truth believest not this, and it is the kindness of thy heart rather than the conviction of thy mind which inspires such words. If Henry had come to kneel before the Vicar of Christ in the splendor of his triumph, when he beheld the princes of Saxony and Thuringia bowed before him, when all Germany trembled in his presence, I could then have presumed on the sincerity of his repentance. But remember, Countess, Henry, pressed by his foes, has before this come to me meek as a lamb, accusing himself of his errors, his sacrileges, and his tyranny, imploring my pardon and crying loudly that never more would he sell bishoprics to simonists. He would lend his arm to the Church, extirpate abuses, and reform the clergy. 'I will faithfully keep my word,' said he, 'I ask only the benediction of the Holy Father, whose submissive and obedient child I promise to prove myself. I will support justice, I will govern my people with love and kindness!' Thou knowest, Countess, how this letter filled my heart with consolation; thou wert witness of my paternal sentiments; thou didst behold how I pardoned him with my whole heart, how I blessed him, how I tenderly embraced the lost sheep. But scarcely had he received my answer when he fell upon the Thuringians, then upon the Saxons; the pride of his triumph made him forget his oaths and vows, and he rushed into all the excess of cruelty, injustice, prevarication, and sacrilege; he renounced God, the Church, and all the virtues of a Christian monarch."

"Holy Father," persisted Mathilda, "attribute this inconstancy only to youth, the force of habit, and the snares of the courtiers who incite him to evil."

"And his criminal will?"

"But he has repented, done penance, and comes to thee imploring pardon. Grant him permission to prostrate himself at thy feet; absolve him with that hand which can open or close heaven to the lowliest as to the greatest, to the humble serf as to the monarch."

"Countess, Henry is less concerned about heaven than about his crown. Believe me, I, better than any one, know his disloyalty; an executioner who makes no exceptions holds the repentant man by the throat. It requires but a few days, and his year of excommunication shall have passed; and if that fatal term expires before he is absolved, Henry, who cannot command time to stop in its course, knows well that he loses all right to the crown in virtue of the Germanic laws, and that the German princes, by the decrees of the imperial constitutions, must choose another sovereign. Henry, who sees the thread of that sword of Damocles about to break, hastens to the Pope, and says: 'Father, save me!' Oh! I would save him, but legally. Tell him to present himself at the Diet of Augsburg, and that if he can free himself from the accusations of the princes of the empire, I shall hasten to absolve and bless him. I shall be the first to reinstate him, and place the crown more firmly on his brow."

Seeing that it was useless to insist, Mathilda retired very sadly. She summoned Henry's ambassadors, and commanded them to find their master and exhort him to patience.

During this interview, Henry, benumbed with cold, stood in the snow in sullen anger. Sometimes he shed tears and struck his breast, imploring mercy. The ambassadors at length came down, and found their master, his head covered with frost and snow, and his hands stiff with cold. They bent the knee before the Prince, who wept and lamented bitterly, and exhorted him not to lose courage, declaring that the Countess had warmly interceded for him with the Pope. His Holiness, whilst protesting his love and respect for the King, had declared that he could not depart from the laws of equity and the order established in the empire, nor the usual decrees of the Roman Church, and that he would conform to the decision of Augsburg.

"There is no question either of princes or of Augsburg!" cried Henry in an angry tone. "The

Pope is judge, but he is also a tender father; whilst the German princes are but rebels and felons, whom I would not make my valets, far from enduring them as my judges. . . ."

As he spoke he quivered in every limb with emotion. Pallid with cold a moment previous, his face was now on fire with the rage which consumed him. The ambassadors persuaded him to leave the place, and go to take some food and rest; for he had been fasting since the preceding day.

Next day he was again permitted to penetrate to the second court, but he vainly sought to enter Canossa. He cried aloud for pardon and mercy from the Pope, uttering doleful lamentations; he stamped his feet on the earth, that he might not be frozen on the spot, and ceased not to extend his arm towards the walls of the palace, beseeching that the gate might be opened and he permitted to kiss the Holy Father's feet. Attracted by the noise, the inhabitants of the place flocked upon the ramparts, and looked over the battlements at the sad spectacle of a great King reduced to so miserable an extremity. The most knowing said:

"That is the result of intrigue! Henry has so often broken his word to the Pope that the Pope no longer believes him."

Some wags mocked at him, crying:

"It is the fable of the shepherd who cried with all his might, Wolf! wolf! and brought out the peasants, to laugh in their faces for being deceived by a false alarm. But when the wolf really came, the joker called loudly, but the peasants turned a deaf ear to his cries, and the wolf tore his flock to pieces. Now, that shepherd is the King. He has promised to be good a hundred times; the Pope got him out of trouble, and immediately the young gallant mocked him. Now that he is in distress, the Pope, with whom he has so often trifled, says: 'Wait till I can believe thee.'"

At sunset the ambassadors came again to seek the King. They told him that all their prayers, entreaties, and supplications to move the Pope to pardon him had been useless. Gregory remained inflexible, and maintained that the decision could only be given in presence of the princes and dukes of Germany.

"Sire," added they, "be not discouraged; hope is the last thing to die in us. If our minds deceive us not, we thought to have perceived, in the firm and austere face of the Pope, a ray of light which gave promise of the sun."

"Alas! no," replied Henry. "Gregory is weary of me, and never will he relent and pardon me; he is a hard and obstinate old man."

"Say not that, sire," replied the ambassadors. "Gregory is a saint; thou hast said so thyself a hundred times. But saints do not allow themselves to be misled by arguments contrary to justice. What syllogisms cannot accomplish in their minds piety, compassion, a tear of repentance will do in their hearts, so gentle and so full of sweetness. This morning, whilst the Countess, Bishop Anselm, the Abbot Hugh, and Azzo d'Este were pleading thy cause, the Pope repeatedly fixed his gaze upon a large crucifix placed in the middle of the table, and at sight of the sacred wounds of our Saviour, a shade of paternal sadness softened the severity of his grave and austere countenance. He seemed deeply moved when the Countess said to him: 'Holy Father, have pity on this poor prince, who for two days has remained barefoot at the gate in the snow without taking the slightest food!' At these words the Pope raised his eyes to the crucifix, and, duty struggling with pity, two tears were seen upon his cheeks. He dismissed them, deeply affected, and retired to his apartments. Sire, believe us, persevere in thy resolution, and thou wilt triumph."

The King left the castle and returned to the inn. The morning of the third day, Henry, alternating between hope and fear, came once more to the castle to seek an entrance, cast himself at the Pontiff's feet, and conquer, through prayers and tears, the mind of his judge and father. But arriving at the third gate, he found it closed more securely than ever. The silence of death reigned around. A heavy snow was falling in thick flakes, the cold was intense, the solitude gloomy and drear. From time to time the face of some curious person appeared at some loophole in the wall to gaze upon King Henry, but was quickly withdrawn before the snow and wind. The King knocked, wept, and called—the gate remained closed. Then Henry, after waiting long, and seeing that they remained deaf to his supplications, despaired of his fortune, and began to run like a madman through the snow.

Finding the Church of St. Nicholas open, he rushed impetuously in, crossed the balustrade of the choir, ascended the altar steps, and, kissing the consecrated stone, he cried aloud:

"Altar of God, venerated relics of martyrs! I come to ye, I confide in ye, I abandon myself to ye! I have called upon men for help, and they have heard me not. Now it is ye whom I invoke! I kiss the altar which represents the Christ! This place is sacred, inviolable. Nothing shall snatch me from this haven of salvation!"

The Abbot of Cluny, attracted by his cries, came thither. Perceiving him, Henry, remaining at the altar, exclaimed:

"Hugh, save me! Go tell the Pope that the King of the Romans is at St. Nicholas', embracing the altar. The altar is Christ, and he will not repulse me. . . . The Pope is his Vicar. Let him, then, have pity on me; let him deign to receive my repentance and give me absolution."

The venerable abbot endeavored to calm his agitation, and, seeing him somewhat quieted, he said:

"My son, thou hast so many times deceived the Sovereign Pontiff that he cannot decide to believe in the sincerity of thy sorrow."

"I swear that I repent from the bottom of my heart!" said the King. "Go, be the surety of my words; swear for me and answer to the Pope for my fidelity."

"I cannot, sire," replied Hugh; "our monastic rule forbids it. . . . But if thou desirest a good voucher, ask thy cousin Mathilda to answer for thee ; she will willingly do so. And thou wouldst not believe what influence she has with the Pope. She holds, so to say, the key to his heart. She is thine only hope."

Henry turned beseechingly to Hugh.

"Be it so," said he. "Venerable Abbot, thou who didst hold me at the baptismal font, obtain, I beseech thee, that the Countess may come to me and compassionate my condition, that, by her mediation, I be permitted to have speech with the Pope. Thou didst make me a Christian, opening the gates of the Church by baptism ; it is to thee that I shall again owe my return to the Communion of Saints, from which I am excluded by my crimes !"

Profoundly touched by these words, Hugh, weeping, embraced the hapless King, and quitted the church to find the Countess Mathilda. Seeing the holy religious so deeply afflicted, and learning the cause of his sorrow, the noble lady went out of the palace and repaired to the church, where Henry still clung to the altar. At sight of her his courage was renewed ; he went to meet her, and, kneeling, affectionately took her hand, which he bathed with tears, and, raising his eyes to his cousin, exclaimed :

"Madame ! I will not release thy hand till thou hast promised to intercede for me with the Sovereign Pontiff."

Ever noble, affable, and generous, the Countess was pained at sight of the King, so humbled at her feet ; she said tenderly :

"Noble cousin, arise, for I cannot see thee reduced to such an extremity. . . . I will seek the Pope ; I will cast myself at his feet, and shall not arise until I have obtained thy pardon. Believe, however, that it is not through hardness of heart that the Holy Pontiff hesitates so long to pardon thee ; his conscience cannot rest in so doing when he recalls so many violations of thy word."

"Cousin," cried the King, arising, "I place my hand on my forehead, mouth, and breast, and swear by my thoughts, words, and heart that my promise shall be henceforth sacred and inviolable. Do thou be my surety, with Adelaide of Susa and Azzo d'Este. Let the Pope demand any condition whatever that he may deign to impose on me ; I shall obey him. He is my father ; I shall be to him a most submissive son. Assure him of my sincere and hearty repentance. Tell him he shall never have cause to regret his clemency ! "

Having returned to the castle, the Countess Mathilda went to the holy Pope Gregory. She spoke so eloquently and shed so many tears, with her face bowed to the earth, that the Holy Father said, raising her kindly :

"God grant, Countess, that I do not pass in thy eyes and in those of all Christendom for an implacable man ! Still, with the same certainty which I have felt in maintaining the divine authority of the Church, I predict to thee that thou, I, and the whole empire shall have cause to repent of this pardon and regret it."

Then came the Marchioness of Susa, Azzo d'Este, and several Italian and German princes who had offered themselves to be Henry's sureties. But the Pope, who confounded not mercy with justice, said :

"I pardon Henry, on condition that he present himself at the Diet of Augsburg, whither I expect to appear ; that he promise to me and to my prelates a free passage and protection from all violence through Germany. If he be acknowledged innocent and permitted to resume the sceptre, he must promise to amend his evil course, and to reign as a Christian monarch, pardoning offences."

Mathilda and the princes who had been his security immediately proceeded to inform him of the happy event. Henry swore before a notary and in their presence to observe the conditions required by the Pope. Then he was conducted with great joy to the Sovereign Pontiff. He knelt at his feet and renewed, in presence of the assembled princes and barons, the promises which he had sworn. Then Gregory, standing before his throne, with hands and eyes raised to heaven, gave him absolution from all bonds of excommunication or interdict ; and, bending towards Henry in a paternal manner, raised him, threw his arms round his neck, kissed him on the forehead, and blessed him. He then received from Henry the kiss of peace.

The morning following, January 26, the whole court repaired with Henry to the church, where the Pope, surrounded by his prelates, celebrated the sacred mysteries. The people flocked thither in crowds. Henry stood in the centre of the chancel, between Mathilda and Adelaide ; behind them crowded Italian and foreign princes, with their lords and vassals. The most religious silence was observed by the crowd, whose gaze was eagerly fixed upon the King and the Pope. When Gregory had reached the Communion, and was about to repeat the "Domine, non sum dignus,"* amid the profound recollection of the crowd during the august ceremony, he took in his hand a portion of the consecrated Host, and, turning to Henry, the princes, and people, spoke thus:

"Behold the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty God, who came down on earth to propitiate the justice of his Eternal Father, offended by the sins of men. O Jesus! I am thy Vicar in this world, and I hold thee in my hand. . . . Deign to hear my voice. I, Gregory, am accused by Henry and his partisans of the horrible crime of having usurped by violence and by simony the Chair of Peter, thine apostle; they declare me to be a violator of thy holy laws, a blasphemer, a robber, an assassin, and a magician! O Christ! judge of the living and the dead, I swear by thy Body and by thy Blood, by thy soul and by thy divinity, that I am innocent of these crimes. If I lie in thy presence, strike me with sudden death at the moment when I receive thee; if I am innocent, render me testimony in face of thy Church, whose Chief and Sovereign Pontiff thou hast elected me!"

So saying, he raised the Sacred Host, made the sign of the cross, still turned towards the people, and said: "Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam meam in vitam æternam";* then he communicated, made his adoration silently, and the people, raising their eyes, saw his serene countenance reflecting a supernatural joy. Then a deep emotion seized upon the whole assembly, and, joy breaking forth from all hearts, a great shout re-echoed through the arches of the temple as from one voice:

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* Lord, I am not worthy.

"Long live Gregory, our Pope! The Lord has proclaimed his innocence. . . . Be he blessed a thousand times, in heaven and on earth! God has glorified his Vicar! Long live Gregory, our Pope!"

When the holy enthusiasm of the princes and people had subsided, the Sovereign Pontiff took the other portion of the Host, and, turning again towards the faithful, he raised it, saying:

"Henry of Franconia, advance! Approach the foot of the altar, and, in thy turn, swear before God that thou art innocent of the crimes of which thou art accused by the vassals of the Church, the divine spouse of Christ. Here is his Sacred Body; receive it, and say freely: 'My Lord and my God! if I be guilty of the crimes which are imputed to me, strike me with sudden death at the moment when thou dost enter my heart!'"

Henry, who did not expect this appeal to the judgment of God, grew pale, and, trembling in every limb, retired terror-stricken into a neighboring chapel to consult with his friends. Then, resuming his place in the middle of the church, and addressing the Pope, he said :

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* The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul to everlasting life.

"Holy Father, if I took this oath in the absence of the German princes and bishops who have accused me to thee, I might, in their eyes, pass for an impostor and a perjurer; allow me to defer this solemn act until the Diet of Augsburg."

The Pope, with the gentle wisdom of the saints, seemed to agree with Henry's reasoning. On his return to the palace after Mass, he invited the King to his table, where he conversed graciously with him, as well as with the Countess and other princely guests assembled to celebrate the joyful event. After dinner, Gregory retired to his apartments with Henry, where they held together a long interview. He exhorted him to live in a manner which would render him dear to God, to the Church, and to the people whom Providence had appointed him to govern. He pointed out to him the peace of heart which he would thus obtain, the glory which would crown his brow, the eternal happiness which he would secure for himself in heaven. Henry appeared deeply moved by these words. He kissed with great warmth the hand which had blessed him, knelt down, and took leave of the Pope. The Pope again embraced him, and before parting granted him a second time his benediction. The same day Henry, followed by his partisans and ambassadors, set out for Reggio.

In the meantime, the Countess Mathilda having received the reply of the Landgrave of Thuringia, consenting to the marriage of his son with Yoland of Groningen, the whole court was given up to rejoicing. Now, as Count Pandolph was obliged to rejoin the King, the nuptials were to be solemnized on the day following these events. The Pope performed the ceremony at the altar of St. Apollonius, in presence of Pandolph and the Countess Mathilda, who took the place of Yoland's mother. The Marchioness Adelaide of Susa placed the nuptial crown on the forehead of the bride, who had for knights of honor the young Amadeus of Savoy and the Marquis Azzo d'Este, and for witnesses the greatest lords of Germany, Italy, France, and Burgundy.

Magnificent presents were offered to the new-made wife; splendid feasts were also given, worthy of the great and powerful Princess who assumed the place of her mother.

Pandolph, charged with the Pope's instructions, would not delay his departure. The day following the marriage, he embraced Yoland and her husband, left them in the midst of rejoicings and nuptial feasts, and rode away from Canossa. As he rode along, he pondered on the painful way through which the Lord had led Yoland to the crown of Thuringia, that the holy hermit Manfred had predicted for her in her infancy. His heart filled with joy; he blessed Providence, whose admirable decrees had brought Yoland's long sorrow unto so happy a conclusion. But the Count's happiness was disturbed by grave and anxious reflections on Henry's too well known deceit and duplicity; he feared new evils for the Church and great agitations in the empire.

On reaching Reggio, he found that the King had left for Parma the evening previous. He did not stop, but followed the steps of the monarch, to defeat, if possible, the criminal designs of Gilbert, who had become the standard-bearer of the Lombard princes hostile to the Pope, of simonist bishops and dissolute clergy, all of whom feared being obliged to return to their duty by restoring to the Church what they had taken from her, and leaving the episcopal sees which they had so dearly bought.

Pandolph no sooner reached Parma than he appeared before the King; he found him gloomy, taciturn, and anxious. He received with a bitter smile the greetings and congratulations of the Pope and the Countess, and said, suddenly changing the subject:

"Thou wert at the wedding, my dear Count; I offer thee my compliments upon it."

Then, addressing the young Marquis of Brunn, who was among the lords:

"It is a pity, my poor Ottocar, that they thought not of making thee a knight of honor. But it matters not; I am preparing my wedding-gifts, and thou shalt offer them, from me, to the young Landgravine."

"Sire, thy gifts are precious," replied Ottocar, with an ill-repressed shudder; "but I flatter myself that mine will be longer remembered."

As he spoke, he cast a side glance at Pandolph. Just then the Archbishop Gilbert appeared before the King, and said in a humble and obsequious tone:

"Invincible King, all the Lombard princes, bishops, and warriors refuse thee their homage. They cannot consent to honor as the first monarch of Western Christendom one who has trampled under foot the royal crown and its dignity before the Anti-Pope Gregory. Appear not before the Lombard cities, for they will close their gates upon thee. Count not on the brave soldiers who have already tarnished their armor and broken their swords to exterminate the monster which ravages Rome and the world. . . . No, they shall no more take lance and shield to defend a King who has so shamefully degraded himself before that haughty priest."

It was easy for those who surrounded the King to conceive that Gilbert had fomented these dissensions only to frighten Henry and induce him to give up his good resolutions, if he had really taken any, or to force him to throw off the mask, if he had sworn to the Pope an obedience which his heart denied. Gilbert wished to draw Henry into making open war upon Gregory, that he might finally usurp the pontificate, which he had coveted for so many years. The good had a lively horror of this impious and ambitious wretch. The wicked applauded him with heart and voice; they offered him their aid, and promised him a speedy triumph.

Two days after these events, Henry entered, early in the morning, the hall wherein the princes were assembled; his countenance was joyful and unclouded.

"My lords," said he in a cheerful tone, "the day is fine and the sun radiant. Mount your horses before one o'clock. I propose to pay a visit to the Pope and my relative, who are making an excursion to the Manor of Bianello. Riding quickly, we shall reach there before dinner. Thou, Marquis Ottocar, shalt not accompany us ; I would charge thee with a mission to the city."

All regarded each other with astonishment ; they understood not why the King had so rapidly changed his mind. The evening previous he was strongly disinclined towards Gregory ; to-day he spoke of going to visit him, of repeating to him his promises of obedience and devotion. When all the knights were ready, Henry mounted his horse and slackened not his pace till he reached the gates of Bianello. Gregory and the Countess Mathilda had really come thither from Canossa. They warmly welcomed the King. After dinner, the King took his hosts apart into an adjoining hall, and said :

"Holy Father, each day I am happier because of the peace which I so long and painfully sought. I bless and thank God and your Holiness, who has received me with such goodness beneath the wing of his mercy ! Though I have thereby drawn on myself the resentment of many Lombard princes and chiefs, by preferring my conscience to royal greatness, and the glory of the Church, our mother, to personal interest, I cannot but feel infinitely happy in thy friendship, which I place above all earthly goods. Yet do I think it advisable that the Lombard princes see thee, hear thee, receive from thy mouth the words of eternal life and at the same time thine apostolic benediction. I therefore come to entreat your Holiness, as well as mine honored cousin, to deign to visit the army of Lombard warriors encamped beyond the Po, in the territory of Bressello. There we shall stipulate in their presence the articles of peace; they shall see with how much justice thou hast dictated them. As for me, I shall consider it a filial duty to accept them and submit to them as a docile son, for the repose of my conscience and the peace of the Christian world. Thou, Mathilda, who wert the happy mediatrix of my happiness—thou canst then enjoy the sweet consolation of seeing thine undertaking crowned with full success. Now will I retire; endeavor to bring us the Holy Father the day after to-morrow. Deign to bless thy son Henry. . . ."

The Pope, touched by these words, blessed the King and promised to visit the camp.

Two days after, the Sovereign Pontiff and the Countess Mathilda, in company with prelates, princes, and barons, rode, escorted by a small detachment, in the direction of Bressello, where they were to cross the Po. They were at a short distance from the river, conversing of Henry's good dispositions, when they suddenly perceived a warrior coming towards them in great haste, who stopped breathless, and cried:

"Holy Father! go not one step further! . . . I am Pandolph," and he raised his visor; "thanks be to God, I escaped the ambushes of the King, and came to warn thee. . . . I have learned that Henry, returning to his former habit of perjury, has collected thy deadliest enemies, amongst whom is the traitor Gilbert, who ceases not to stir up, in all hearts, hatred and anger against thee. The intriguers held counsel last night in the King's tent, and Henry formed the criminal design of seizing upon thy person and on that of the Countess, to cast ye into dungeons, and leave ye there to perish, where none might suspect the tomb wherein ye were buried alive. To attain his ends Henry has placed two formidable ambuscades of Lombard warriors, who were to fall upon thee on thy way and drag thee to his tent. Meantime, a portion of his army will march upon Canossa to surprise that fortress, and the remainder will repair to Rome, where Gilbert, proclaimed Pope, will make fearful carnage among the prelates and people most devoted to your Holiness. Holy Father, lose not an instant; return in all haste to Canossa."

At this news Gregory and the Countess retraced their steps. Mathilda had the guards strengthened, the bridges raised, the gates barricaded, at the same time sending orders to all the neighboring fortresses to put themselves in readiness to repulse an assault. Not content with providing provisions for the castle, which the armies of Henry might seek in vain to reduce, she took a great resolution. To prevent him from ever having possession of it, she restored it to God, who had bestowed it upon her, as she humbly confessed, always writing at the bottom of all public documents of her reign this admirable formula : *Mathildes Dei gratia si quid est.*[*] She presented herself in the apartments of the Pope, and said, kneeling before him :

"Holy Father, Vicar of God upon earth, henceforth I give, bequeath, and dedicate for ever all my Italian States to St. Peter, Prince of Apostles, to the Roman Church, to thee, august successor of Peter ; and, to render this donation valid, here is the solemn and authentic act, drawn up by the hand of my notary in presence of the Grand Master of the Apostolic Chancery, and of foreign princes and lords."

At such munificence and magnanimity Gregory raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed :

"Mathilda, God and St. Peter accept thy gift ! The princes of the earth shall dispute thy heritage. They shall place a rapacious hand upon it, and seek to snatch it from God and St. Peter ; they shall possess themselves of a large portion of it, but there will yet remain enough that the Church may inscribe thy name in the rank of her most generous benefactors ! On my return to Rome I shall lay thine offering on the tomb of St. Peter. God is my witness that I tried every means, with sincere and paternal interest, to bring back Henry to the fold. That cruel wolf will pursue me even to the rock of the Vatican ; he will seek to expel me from the chair of Peter, to place therein the Anti-Pope Gilbert. Alas ! through Henry and through him Rome shall see her streets overflowing with the blood of the friends of God! Fire will consume the seven hills; the plains shall be covered with ruins. But amid plains to-day uncultivated I behold a new Rome which shall raise to heaven gorgeous temples and magnificent palaces. God wills that I see these ruins and this carnage, from which his powerful hand shall save me, and I shall go to die in exile beside the tomb of St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist. Thou, O Countess! shalt sustain a long and cruel war for thy fidelity to the Church and because of thy munificence. Henry will fall upon thee at the head of German armies; he will despoil thee of the fairest portion of thy domains. But fear not! God shall be with thee! The Italian arms shall cause thee to triumph. . . . O fields of Sorbara! O rocks of Monteveglio! I behold crushed at thy feet the arrogance of this oppressor of the Church! And thou, invincible fortress of Canossa—thou who receivest me to-day with such pomp—from the height of thy towers thou shalt be witness of the defeat and rout of Henry, who shall see the imperial standard hung for ever in the noblest of thy temples as a perpetual trophy of his defeat."

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[*] Mathilda, who is what she is by the grace of God.

Gregory ceased, extended his hand over Mathilda, and blessed her.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE METROPOLIS OF MODENA.

THE Metropolitan Church of Modena, begun in the eleventh century by Laufranc, is built in the Roman style, whose characteristic is the rounded arch. In some of its parts, however, it resembles the Gothic type. This vast and sumptuous edifice of white marble is adorned on the exterior, over the windows, by a balustrade of light pillars supporting arches of rare elegance. The entrance is surmounted by a massive pulpit, whence the bishop blesses the people. It is upheld by twisted columns cut out of a single block of marble, on whose base rest two winged griffins, with their claws buried in the flanks of a hind.

Following an arrangement common to all the ancient basilicas, the interior is composed of three large naves; the chancel occupies about one-third of their length, and is reached by two colossal stairways with graceful balustrades. From this elevation there is a descent into subterranean crypts supported by a forest of marble columns. There stands the altar which covers the venerated relics of the illustrious Saint Géminian, patron of Modena. Night and day lighted lamps burn in the sacred enclosure, always frequented by the pious inhabitants, who never invoke in vain their holy patron. Behind the chancel rises the celebrated tower of white marble, surmounted by a slender steeple. It is one of the finest monuments of the Middle Ages.

In the spring of the year 1106, this magnificent cathedral was beautifully decorated for a festival. Immense draperies of scarlet silk covered the walls, which did not then wear, as now, the solemn hue of ages. The ceilings of the crypts blazed with a thousand lights; lamps hung from the arches of the church and shed around floods of light; the ground, strewn with flowers and roses, was covered with splendid Eastern carpets. The carvings of the grand nave and long lateral windows shed through their colored glass a light so dim that the lamps illumined the dusk of a misty twilight. An immense crowd, gathered from all the surrounding country, crowded the streets and public squares. Modena was celebrating on that day the most brilliant festival which it had ever witnessed. The Sovereign Pontiff, Pascal III., surrounded by a crowd of cardinals and prelates, had just made his entrance to the city with the Archbishop of Ravenna, and followed by all the bishops of the metropolis, abbots of the most noted monasteries in the country, and the most eminent members of the clergy. A brilliant concourse of princes and lords from all the provinces of Tuscany, of Lombardy, and of Amelia had assembled at Modena. The Countess Mathilda had at length come to offer homage to the Pope at the head of a numerous band of warriors.

The basilica of Saint Géminian was almost finished. Dudo, Bishop of Modena, together with the clergy and citizens, were availing themselves of this solemnity to effect the translation of the relics of the holy patron of the city, and place them with great pomp beneath the altar of the new temple erected in his name. When the ancient monument was opened, and the body was found perfectly intact, the people's exclamations of joy resounded through the air. The relics were transported in procession, among thousands of tapers, to the new shrine, where they were laid, wrapped in costly and magnificent tissue, the gift of the Countess Mathilda.

The great lady of Italy, as she is called in the old chapter-book of Modena, wore that day a magnificent train robe of red silk, and over it a green mantle falling to her feet. She held in her hand an azure sceptre terminating in a large golden apple; she wore the ducal bonnet on her head, surmounted by a crown of precious stones. She stood near the shrine, with Bonsignore, Bishop of Reggio, Dudo, Bishop of Modena, and Lanfranc, the architect. Surrounded by her gorgeous court and her warriors, she awaited the coming of Pope Pascal, who, with his cardinals, bishops, abbots, and clergy, was to consecrate the altar and give the apostolic benediction to the people.

The beholder might read on Mathilda's face, full of joy and fervor, a sweet mingling of emotions, overflowing from her heart and reflected in her looks, tenderly bent on her illustrious father and protector. At once humble and joyous, she thanked Him who had realized in a manner so resplendent the promises made to her at Canossa, in a prophetic ecstasy, by the great Pontiff Gregory, the sublime pillar of the Church, the indefatigable adversary of the enemies of the Holy See. Can there be found in all history, I will not say a woman, but a generous and noble-hearted emperor, who would have resisted the enemies of the faith with more constancy and firmness than this magnanimous heroine, braving the formidable armies of the Emperor Henry ? What threats, what violence, what persecution, did not the Emperor employ to withdraw her from this inviolable devotion to the Holy See, which was the life and soul of all her enterprises ! The whole West trembled and hurled at her the bitterest and most furious denunciations, but she remained unshaken. She beheld the finest and most populous cities of her vast dominions sacked and laid waste, yet she ceased not to defend the Church. The most powerful fortresses were carried by assault, razed, dismantled, leaving her only that of Canossa and some others in the countries of Modena and Reggio ; yet she did not lose courage. The Emperor offered her the restitution of her states if she would recognize the Anti-Pope Gilbert. She answered, with a noble intrepidity, that if nothing was left to her but her breast with which to defend the rights of the Pope, she would expose it to the lances and swords of the German army, desiring to sustain till death the honor and authority of the See of Peter. And with undaunted courage she opposed all the efforts of the wicked conspirators, and came forth triumphant from these terrible combats.

Henry IV., after the oaths and promises which he had sworn to Gregory at the castle of Canossa; after having been relieved from his interdict and received the kiss of peace and the apostolic benediction of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, formed a horrible plot to seize upon the Pope and the Countess Mathilda. Seeing his treason discovered, he gave rein to all his fury, threw off the mask, and, in the face of Christendom, declared deadly war against the holy Pope. He began by imprisoning his legates, Gerard, Cardinal of Ostia, and Anselm, Bishop of Lucca. Then Gregory, seeing the road to Germany closed against him, sent to the Diet princes who awaited at Forchheim another legation, composed of Cardinal Bernard and the Abbot of Marsiglia, charged to make known to the bishops and magnates on what conditions he had relieved Henry from the excommunication, and the manner in which, a traitor to his oaths, he had once more revolted against the Church.

The Diet elected as the new King of Germany the valiant Rudolph of Suabia, who, raising a numerous army, made it a duty to reorganize the empire and deliver the Holy Father from the oppression of Henry.

At the news of this election Henry left Italy, entered Germany with all his forces, and began a long struggle, which lasted, with various alternations of success and reverses, till Rudolph, already a conqueror, and pursuing the fugitives in the marshes of Grone, fell mortally wounded by the stroke of a lance. Still more irritated against the Pope, Henry had no mercy on the places which he took by force of arms. He committed atrocious cruelties, expelled from their sees the partisans of Gregory, sold abbeys, churches, and benefices ; he imprisoned, tortured, and massacred priests and abbots. Not content with these excesses, and desiring at any cost to dethrone Gregory, he assembled at Bressano a synod of excommunicated bishops, deposed the true Pope, and replaced him by the impious Gilbert, who took the name of Clement III.

Such was the commencement of the great schism which desolated the Church of Germany and Italy, in which all the princes and bishops espoused Gilbert's cause. Henry, followed by the Anti-Pope, whom he wished to conduct to Rome in triumph and enthrone him at the Vatican, descended the Alps and entered the plains of Lombardy without the slightest opposition. Mathilda alone watched all his movements. Entrenched in the most inaccessible fortresses, she firmly repelled the invasion of the haughty tyrant, who had hoped to accomplish her entire defeat. "Although he had under his command, besides the German armies, the whole forces of Lombardy and the other schismatic provinces, never," says Donizone, "could King Henry vanquish the Countess nor force her to retreat a step."

Beside himself with rage and malice, he marched upon Rome. Having reached Serchio, Henry learned that some canons of high birth had sown dissension in the chapter. He took pains to fan the flame, and caused the whole town to rise against the holy Bishop Anselm, who was banished. After this odious action, which he knew would afflict the Church and Mathilda, he advanced towards Florence. This city, which had remained faithful to God and the Countess, closed its gates against him. He only took it after a very long siege; thence he continued his march towards Rome, where he encamped in the Gardens of Nero, near the Vatican. Gregory, with the Roman militia, reinforced by auxiliary troops which Mathilda had sent him, made a vigorous resistance. Summer came, bringing with it malignant fevers and pestilential miasmas, which made great ravages in the German army. Henry was compelled to raise the siege. He returned in the spring of the following year, took possession of a part of Rome, and proclaimed as Pope the impious Gilbert, who, on his part, had illegally and sacrilegiously proclaimed him Emperor.

In the midst of these agitations Mathilda sustained the Catholic cause with an undaunted heart, exhausting her treasures in assisting all the exiled bishops, priests, and lords who were banished and despoiled by the schismatics. All Italy was convulsed. There was no province in which they had not to deplore the disasters of war or the contention of parties, which stirred up bitter contests betwen the citizens. The whole of schismatic Lombardy was in arms against Mathilda. Aubert, who headed this league, had expelled the troops of the country from the plains of Reggio and Modena. Mathilda alone resisted this whirlwind ; her skilful manœuvres often defeated the arrogance of her adversaries, who, confiding in their numbers and valor, hoped to overcome without difficulty the warriors of the Countess. Unforeseen attacks and frequent ambuscades put to naught all the plans of the Marquis Aubert. Having arrived, not without much difficulty, at the Castle of Sorbara, he found therein a strong and unyielding garrison. This resistance arrested his course just when he least expected it; and as he did not judge it prudent to march upon Rome before being master of this formidable fortress, he prepared to besiege it.

Always on her guard, Mathilda, having learned through her scouts that the schismatic army, supremely presumptuous, was totally undisciplined, passing the day in drinking and the night in sleep, almost without sentinels, entered, favored by the darkness, into the Lombard camp, giving for the war-cry to her warriors, "Viva Saint Peter!" They dispersed in small groups among the tents, and at a given signal shouted their war-cry and began the onslaught. At this formidable cry the soldiers awoke. The name of the apostle terrified them. They rushed out of the tents, half naked and unarmed, in the hope of saving themselves by flight, and were slain without the smallest resistance. Aubert, seizing a sword, flew to the thickest of the fight to rally and encourage his men. Vain efforts! Blinded by terror and confusion, they ran about aimlessly, and, dealing blows to each other, were slain by their own arms or fell beneath those of the enemy. At the noise of battle, the besieged made a vigorous sortie, rather to collect the spoils of victory than to combat. The leader, Aubert, was slain by a javelin stroke; six of the principal leaders were made prisoners, with Eberard of Parma and a hundred others of the most famous Lombard champions. Gandolph, flying from the soldiers of Mathilda, remained concealed in a bramble-bush for three days and nights. The treasure of the camp, the horses, and the immense load of baggage became the spoils of the victorious Countess. The schismatics were thrown into consternation by this brilliant feat, which gave a gleam of hope to the faithful.

The following year Henry concentrated his forces against Rome; he took entire possession of it, and blockaded the Pope in the fortress of Crescentius, now the Castle of San Angelo, where he had taken shelter from the fury of Gilbert, who sought by every means to lay hands on his sacred person. Gilbert had corrupted and gained over to his cause a great portion of the citizens by allowing them to pillage the treasures of the churches and basilicas, the goods of the faithful, and giving benefices to the most unworthy persons. Henry, having joined him, distributed gold and silver among these corrupted masses, to induce Rome to open her gates to him and give up Gregory. Informed of the imminent peril which threatened Gregory, Robert Guiscard, Duke of Apulia, hastened to Rome, at the head of his Normans and the flower of the Apulian troops, to retake the city. Having forced the passage on the Lateran side and made a breach, the soldiers of Robert poured like a furious torrent over Mount Celius, burning and putting to the sword all whom they met. The wind, blowing violently, sent the flame to the Quirinal, and even to the Viminal; so that in a few hours ancient Rome was reduced to ashes, suffering thus, in punishment of its treason, a destruction from which, even in our own day, it has not recovered.

Robert Guiscard, having entrenched himself in the Amphitheatre and ravaged the Aventine, at length made his way to the Tower of Crescentius, overthrew the imperial forces, rescued Gregory from the sacrilegious hands of Henry and Gilbert, and retreated with him to the Liris, whence he conducted him safe and sound to the city of Salerno. Then Henry, together with the Anti-Pope, wreaked all his rage and cruelty on the ashes of Rome. The hapless Romans expiated their infidelity to the legitimate pastor, and would have paid still more dearly for it had not Henry been obliged to return in all haste to Germany, where, after the death of Rudolph of Suabia, the Catholic princes had elected as King of the Romans Hermann of Lorraine, who, at the head of the Saxon armies, disputed with Henry the possession of the empire. After various vicissitudes, he defeated his competitor, cruelly avenged himself on the Catholic party, and, believing himself already freed from his enemies, returned to Italy, burning to vent his resentment against Mathilda.

Already had the death of Gregory, occurring in 1086 at Salerno, created new agitations in the Church of God, persecuted by Gilbert. But the Countess Mathilda made an attack on Rome at the head of her army, expelled the Anti-Pope, and proceeded, with the clergy and the people, to the election of a lawful Pope. All the suffrages were in favor of the wise and pious Didier, Abbot of Monte Casino, who took the name of Victor III. The Pope having died in the following year, Mathilda labored again for the regular and lawful election of Urban III. However, the corrupted party of the Romans revolted, treacherously expelled Urban, and reopened the gates to the Anti-Pope, who was thus enabled to violate the chair of Peter and persecute Catholics.

Mathilda collected all her forces to replace Urban upon the throne. She began her march towards Rome, when Henry, delivered from his enemies in Germany, went down into Italy with a considerable force. He hoped to defeat the Countess, who alone resisted the charge of all the schismatic Italians leagued against her. Her tact, her military and diplomatic talents, had served her so well that she had vanquished her enemies one by one, and reduced them to esteem themselves fortunate in accepting a truce. But as soon as they got wind of the arrival of Henry, they raised their heads; insults and sarcasms were heard around her. "Fool!"

cried they, "wherefore confront alone the forces of Germany, and expose thy life to save that of the Pope?" And speaking thus, the lords sharpened their swords and united with the Emperor in combating her till death. But this invincible woman, confiding in God and Saint Peter, awaited them single-handed. Henry at first took all her castles, with the lands of her patrimony beyond the mountains, which were of great importance; then he descended the Alps, took up his position on the river Po, and laid siege to Mantua, which opened its gates to him through the treason of Hugo, who was Mathilda's lieutenant, but a secret partisan of Henry. After that the Emperor successively reduced all the fortified places which the Countess possessed beyond the river. He then took all the places situated along the river, Montemorello, Montealfredo, Modena, and continued his manœuvres against the others with the confidence of certain triumph.

But when he had reached the fort of Montebello, now Monteveglio, Henry met with a resistance which was totally unexpected. He made an assault on the castle with the best troops of his army, resolved not to raise the siege before he had razed the walls, slain the defenders, and set fire to the place. But he had to deal with the bravest warriors of Italy, who had resolved to show him the worth and valor of the Italian arms combating for country, for justice, and for the integrity of the faith.

Henry closely blockaded the fort, making furious assaults every day, with a violence which increased by reason of the unyielding resistance offered him by these brave Italians. Seeing that the ordinary machines could not shake the foundations nor effect a breach in the fortifications, the Emperor, full of shame at seeing so powerful a force prolonging the siege without success, summoned the most expert and skilful workers in that art, to ask them by what means they should take possession of the castle. Without losing any time, they began to construct a formidable machine, arranged so as to send forth a shower of projectiles, masses of stone and iron, to crush and reduce to powder the walls of bronze and steel. This terrible machine set in motion a multitude of engines and battering-rams to batter the fortifications and effect breaches in them.

Meanwhile, the miserable Gilbert, anxious at the King's delay, and fearing to find himself at the mercy of his enemies, whose number increased every day, because of the impiety and atrocity with which this ruffian profaned the Holy See, resolved to repair to the imperial camp. On her part, Mathilda was reduced to the last extremity. Liguria and Lombardy were in open rebellion, Tuscany was in revolt, and Emilia was almost entirely in the power of the schismatics. The duchies of Spoleto, Picenum, and Camerino were depopulated by the armies of Henry. Mathilda herself was short of money and reduced to a few forts. Her partisans were persecuted, distressed, and alarmed; the greater part of the clergy were in fetters or in exile. In this state of things, Henry offered peace to Mathilda, with the restitution of all her provinces, which he pledged himself to reinstate in as flourishing a condition as before the war, but on condition of recognizing Gilbert. Timid courtiers, pusillanimous bishops, subtle casuists, pressed the Countess to accept these proposals out of pity for her people and subjects. Mathilda drew herself up and asked: "Is the peace purchased at the price of offending God a true peace? No; it is a crime. What is a kingdom, if conscience remains inviolate? Say to Henry that if God is for me, I fear not the Emperor."

Henry, seeing that it was useless to insist further, and having finished his gigantic engine of destruction, said to Gilbert and to his followers:

"To-morrow we shall be in Monteveglio; I shall destroy that city, and then carry my arms to Canossa! I am curious to observe if the Papal keys will open a new kingdom to my cousin."

"Yes, in the clouds," replied the Anti-Pope with an ironical smile.

However, after the conclusion of the negotiations with Henry, Mathilda succeeded in secretly reinforcing the place and introducing therein a large detachment of soldiers. The following night they made a vigorous sortie and set fire to the machine, which was soon reduced to ashes. Then they impetuously assailed the imperial camp. It was a terrible struggle—like a troop of lions rushing upon a herd of bulls. Rage lent untold strength and new weapons. Mathilda, stationed upon the heights, descended with her troops to reinforce the assailants, and routed the imperial forces, who fled in complete disorder; their ranks were utterly broken; those who attempted to make a retreat were completely cut to pieces. Henry had at first animated them with his voice and example, but, seeing the defeat of his battalions, he fell back, leaving beneath the walls of Monteveglio a multitude of soldiers mortally wounded. He lost the flower of his officers and one of his sons, whom he dearly loved. The besieged took possession of the camp, baggage, provisions, and numerous horses and arms. More and more enraged, Henry feigned to march towards Modena, but, by an adroit stratagem, he secretly retraced his steps along the base of the mountains to conceal himself beyond Bianello, there surprise Mathilda, and seize upon Canossa. But the valiant heroine divined the Emperor's plan; she therefore took another road over the summits of the mountains, and succeeded in passing Henry. She was thus enabled to retire to the fort of Bianello, before her enemy thought of pursuing her. Without stopping, Henry climbed the heights, occupied all the passages, and at length arrived before the castle. But, to his great disappointment, he suddenly found himself confronted by Italian warriors. A deadly struggle recommenced. Unable to display his troops, and shut in as he was by the rugged slopes of the mountain, Henry saw himself rendered almost powerless, whilst the warriors of Mathilda were continually receiving aid from Canossa. The cavalry of the King could neither manœuvre nor charge on the enemy. Mathilda went from rank to rank, animating her troops and ranging them in the form of a cone, to offer less front to the enemy and fight more securely. This dexterous arrangement, added to the advantage of the ground, assured the success of her army, whose rear-guard rested in Canossa.

Ottocar, who had sworn to be the first upon the breach, carried the imperial standard. Mathilda recognized him, and pointed him out to her soldiers. He was made prisoner, and the flag taken from his hands. At this sight the imperial courage began to decline. Then began a horrible carnage, whence even those who sought safety in flight did not escape; for in their haste they slipped over the edges of precipices and rolled to the base of the mountain, torn by the jagged edges of the rock. Henry owed his safety to a miracle. His defeat was so complete that the fugitives could not rally till they reached the banks of the Po, which he precipitately crossed, having to mourn the flower of his lords killed or made prisoners in the battle.

After having subdued the Lombards, humbled the arrogance of Gilbert, conquered and cut to pieces Henry's army, Mathilda immediately took possession of her states and pursued the Emperor to the walls of Verona, where he had taken refuge with the remnants of that formidable army which had seemed likely to destroy all Italy. The flight of the King was so hasty that he was obliged to abandon all his treasures; the Countess had merely the trouble of collecting them.

Mathilda made her entrance into Canossa amid the bishops and lords faithful to the Church. She repaired to the temple of Saint Apollonius, there to sing the praises of God, who had so visibly protected her, and to lay the imperial standard in perpetual memory of so happy a victory. Full of shame and confusion, Henry took refuge in Germany, where still more cruel reverses awaited him. Whilst he still continued to make war against the Church like a furious lion, his son Conrad raised against him the standard of revolt, and reduced him to such an extremity that the wretched Emperor sought only death. Gilbert remained hardened in wickedness. He could not endure that the true Pope Urban, or afterwards Pascal II., should reign in triumph at Rome, but he had not sufficient forces at his command to expel them. He organized a band of highwaymen, who robbed and assassinated prelates on their way to the Council of Rome, and the pilgrims going to the tomb of the holy apostles. The unhappy wretch died suddenly of an attack of gout, impenitent and excommunicated; his body was thrown into the Tiber like that of an unclean animal.

After having rendered thanks to God in the temple of Saint Apollonius, Mathilda caused Ottocar to be brought before her, and said:

"Marquis of Brunn, I know thy designs in the taking of Canossa. . . . Thou wouldst have been the first to plant the imperial banner on the highest tower, put all my court to the sword, and cast the old Papist—me, in a word—into the depths of a dungeon in thy German castles. Thou seest how God mocks at the vows of his enemies! There are still old debts which thou wouldst pay to my dear Yoland of Groningen, now the wife of the Landgrave of Thuringia, whom thou didst long persecute, though she was defenceless. But thou seest that Mathilda is not Yoland, and that the Castle of Canossa is not the Convent of Saint Mary at Brunn! I can now cast thee into the depths of this tower, on the summit of which thou wouldst have unfurled the banner of Henry; but I prefer to teach thee how Christians should avenge themselves. Thou art a brave knight; thy mind is lofty and thy heart generous. By espousing the cause of Henry and his Anti-Pope, thou didst war against Christ, persecute and distress the Church, and scandalize Christendom. Excommunication and anathema are upon thee. Yet thou canst return to God and render thyself worthy of eternal salvation. The sepulchre of Jesus Christ is in the hands of the infidels. Here is a lance and shield; join the Crusaders, cross the seas, fight like a valiant hero as thou art, and then thou wilt die a martyr or live a glorious champion of Christ!"

"Countess," replied Ottocar, in a voice broken by the liveliest emotion, "thy generosity surprises me not; thou dost ever outdo thyself in greatness. But I cannot overcome my amazement when I consider that the magnificent gifts which thou makest me of my life and liberty are rendered more precious by the condition which thou dost thereto affix. Is there an aim nobler or more glorious than that of combating to deliver the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the infidels? Receive, then, in thy hands I leave it, my solemn oath! Give me the sacred sign before that altar where thou hast so often prayed for the exaltation of the holy Church, where thou hast sung the praises of Him who has rewarded thy faith and devotion by a glorious triumph. I depart for the Crusade. Make known to Yoland that her persecutor, thanks to thee, has found the means to render himself worthy of her. When she prays, may she deign to send towards the plains of Palestine a breath of supplication to God, that he may reanimate in battle the courage of the Crusader! . . . Oh! that she were now at Canossa, that I might pray her to affix with her own hands the cross upon my coat-of-arms. Such a recollection would have been very dear to me! . . ."

"Marquis," said Mathilda, "I still have Yoland's harp, covered with a purple cloth. I shall cut therefrom a cross, and fasten it myself upon thy breast. Bishop Anselm shall bless it. He is a saint, and will obtain for thee grace and the benediction of God."

Some days later the young knight set out to embark with the other warriors upon a Pisan vessel.

Her enemies being vanquished and dispersed, Mathilda reigned in peace over Italy, ever victoriously protecting the Popes, persecuted and molested by the wicked spirit of the world. She renewed more solemnly the donation of her states to the Holy See, and, remembering the gift of Pepin and of Charlemagne, believed it but a simple act of restitution. The bitter and violent agitations of the ninth and tenth centuries had taken from the Church a great portion of its domains, which the designs of divine Providence had added to the patrimony of Mathilda, who hastened to offer it unselfishly to Saint Peter.

Therefore let certain politicians cease their demands, loudly questioning by what right the Church possesses these states! But they know history as well as, or better than we; they know that there is no dynasty on earth which has the source of its right of possession clearer or better founded than that of the Church. And yet they cry out obstinately that the Church took possession of its provinces by fraud, by abusing the ignorance and superstition of the sovereigns and people of the Middle Ages.

You know history better than we; but more than any others do you abuse the ignorance of the multitude. It has, say you, become so wise and prudent by civilization. Alas! it is no different to-day from what it was a hundred, two hundred, or a thousand years ago. You have magic words, you dazzle the vulgar with your glittering baubles, you imitate Swatiza swallowing the lead, chewing tow, and drawing forth red ribbons. But for all that you can say, the Countess Mathilda will be none the less illustrious; all good people shall cease not to exalt her in the course of ages. Her tomb is in the Vatican. She shares the honors rendered to the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles by the numerous pilgrims who go thither to prostrate themselves. All unite in glorifying her munificence and applauding that magnanimous heart which ever beats with love and respect for the Church and her pastors. Would the writer who wrote so emphatically "that Henry taught the Cæsars how they ought to treat the Popes," be, in the sight of God and all just men, Henry or Mathilda, Gregory VII. or Gilbert? Would this loyal and honest man promise and then break his word, swear and perjure himself at all times, as did King Henry, or maintain the integrity of his word and make himself the defender of truth and justice with Mathilda? Would he persecute the Church, sell her at auction, place Anti-popes in the sacred chair, or remain faithful to the Vicars of Jesus Christ, defend them in war, receive them in persecution, honor them in insults? Let his conscience answer.

If we have not borne false testimony in describing Henry, if we have depicted him such as contemporary authors, even his friends and partisans, show him to be, how could so noble a writer invite the Cæsars to imitate this hapless prince? Why not, on the contrary, persuade them to imitate those glorious heroes who merit an eternal crown for their fidelity in defending the holy Church? The time of the Anti-Popes is no more, but what does not pass away is this desire on the part of so many deluded men who rejoice at the struggles and afflictions of the Church; and that which the Cæsars could never accomplish, because divine grace restrained them, certain authors flatter themselves that they can effect by stirring up against the Church hatred and contempt and the insults of people led away and enthralled by their sophisms.

We entreat our readers to pronounce dispassionately between Henry and Mathilda, appealing to their sound judgment. Henry mocked at all laws, both human and divine ; he spread ignorance and barbarism throughout Italy, and ended his life without kingdom or glory. Mathilda, on the other hand, planted the precious germ of that high civilization which elevated the destinies of Italy to such a height that she became a queen among the nations of the West. With the aid of Italian valor, Mathilda vanquished the most powerful of the foreign powers who conspired for her ruin. She governed that vast monarchy with such wisdom, magnanimity, and benevolence that she received the surname of the "Good Lady." Her name is held in benediction, and her mortal remains rest with honor in the grandest temple in the world, amid the urns and sublime mausoleums of the holiest and most illustrious pontiffs of the Church of God.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

FINDING myself one day with two friends in the sweet solitude of Notre Dame de Galloro, on the hill of Aricia, I led them to an outlet of Lake Nemi, which flows under the rock of Collepardo into the valley, which it waters and fertilizes through its whole extent. Before reaching this spot, I pointed out to them the great layers of stone in the Appian Way, resting intact for a length of more than a hundred feet, and supporting the point which rests in the Val d'Or upon the side of Collepardo. They could never weary of admiring these gigantic blocks, so perfectly grouped for more than two thousand years, and those beautiful rounded arches giving passage to the waters of the Val d'Or. There stands the celebrated shrine of Mary, its spire rising from amid a cluster of olive-trees. We left with regret these imposing ruins, taking our way along a road bordered by rows of elder-trees, with their sombre and tufted foliage, which waved their white and flowering boughs above our heads, filling the air with a delicious fragrance. A chorus of nightingales sang their sweet melodies among the luxuriant verdure, and gave to this charming solitude a peace and calm serenity so enchanting that we slackened our pace to lose none of their sweet and tender concert.

At the spot where the path diverges into two broad roads leading to the canal, we met a party who had also come to visit this wonderful outlet of Lake Nemi. The party was composed of a lady, her two daughters, their brother, a young student, a prelate, who was the Countess's uncle, and a canon. The prelate, who knew us, courteously saluted us.

"Come," said he to me, "you, who pretend to be something of an antiquarian, can perhaps inform us of the name of him who made this opening. Is it as ancient as the people of Aricia pretend? Is it a Roman work? Such, at least, is my opinion."

"My lord," I replied, "the Romans opened the canal of the Lake of Albano, but that of Lake Nemi is anterior, by several centuries, to the foundation of Rome; it dates back to the most remote period of the Pelagii, to an epoch which history cannot fix, because it is more ancient than the memory of man. The first colonies of the Pelagii established themselves in Italy, and erected, in the valley of Aricia, on the shores of Lake Nemi, the famous oracle of the Phœnician Astartes, which the people of the West later named the Arician Diana. The Greeks, always inclined to appropriate everything, pretend that the Tauric Diana was brought to the neighborhood of Chersonesia by Orestes, son of Agamemnon; then the oracle of Nemi is anterior by three centuries, at least, to the taking of Troy.

Now, the Pelagii, seeing that the sudden risings of the lake sometimes reached as high as its banks and overflowed so as to threaten the temple, conceived the idea of opening a canal, which would force it to maintain an equal level. These Eastern nations, very well versed in the science of hydraulics, penetrated the rock which faces the valley of Aricia ; they set miners to work beside the lake and in the valley, who worked so diligently that they met each other half-way. What proves that they broke through the obstacle of the two opposing points is that the outlet makes a turn at the spot where the workmen met, and that on this spot strokes of a pickaxe, marked in the stone, show a contrary direction. They managed the plains and elevations so skilfully that the water, without slackening its course, is not liable to obstruct the canal by the violence of its fall, as occurred at the famous aqueduct of Lake Fiucine, in the time of the Emperor Claudius."

The two young girls, as anxious for instruction as they usually are at that age, listened to me with deep attention. One of them, named Isabella, was about eighteen ; her sister, Antoinette, was verging on her sixteenth year. Good and intelligent children, they had received an excellent education, by which they had well profited ; they particularly enjoyed the reading of good books. They were especially fond of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, which they read to their mother in leisure hours. Often there arose little friendly quarrels with their brother, who, partly in jest, often argued with them on some truth of religion or a principle of natural right or sound diplomacy. Then the young girls would grow warm, and call him an unbeliever and a Mazzinian, which would make the young man still more caustic.

When I had finished speaking, I saw Isabella bend towards her uncle to ask him who I was.

"Oh!" answered he aloud, "he is the author of the 'Jew of Verona'! . . ."

It needed no more to make the young girls bewilder me with questions, but the prelate interrupted them, saying:

"What was your idea in taking us back a hundred years with your Countess Mathilda? The 'Jew of Verona' treats of the troubles of 1848, which we have seen and touched with our finger; that was what made such a reputation for your book in Italy. Friends and enemies passed it round amongst them—the one to amuse themselves, and the others to grow angry. In 'Ubaldo and Irene,' you speak of the French Revolution and Napoleon, and, even while yawning a little over it, people could not help reading it with some attention. But as for 'Mathilda,' it is too much! . . . The world is civilized now, thank God! and we have other customs, other ideas, other tendencies. In this enlightened age you bring us back to barbarous times with a real pleasure, which I have no doubt affords you some gratification, but which I do not think will be equally pleasing to your readers."

"My lord," answered I, "you do not ask me this question for your own information, nor for that of the Rev. Canon, nor for these young ladies; perhaps you have in view this elegant young gentleman."

"Oh! I never read such monkish stuff," replied the young man, with a half-mocking, half-annoyed air, making a grimace as if he were asked to drink some absinthe.

"Do not believe him, sir," said the two sisters quickly; "he delights in your review. He tells us, too, that he does not read the *Civiltà*; but we have often found it under his pillow!"

"I run over it to be up in the current literature . . . of the Italian tongue. . . ."

"Is it for the tongue? . . . The fact is that it often sets your teeth on edge, my dear brother!" replied Isabella, smiling and darting at Antoinette a malicious glance. "But will you not, sir, tell us what were your reasons for writing 'Mathilda of Canossa'?"

"Young ladies," answered I, "that the subject is old and worn out I am aware; still, contemporary historians relate it in a style which is barbarous, if you will, but clear and distinct. Reading those old folios with their yellow leaves, the evidence is clear that Gregory VII. was a holy man with a great and undaunted heart. He had a lofty mind and was animated by the purest intentions. He resolved to purify the Church of God of the abuses with which the wicked had profaned it; to free it from the oppression caused by the pride and avarice of the great ones of the earth. Henry IV. is described precisely as I have depicted him; I have only lent my colors to those old chronicles! Yet—would you believe it?—there are writers in our own days who might be mistaken for fanatical members of the Synod of Worms, who cast reproach and maledictions on the head of the great Saint Gregory. It is true that they reserve all their tenderness for Henry. Their heart, all gall for the Pope, becomes all honey for the Emperor. He is a German, an oppressor of Italy; but were he a Turk or Tartar, he would be equally welcome, because he seeks to humble the Popes. Those patriots who cry out in one place: 'Away with strangers! away with barbarism! liberty and independence for Italy!' a few pages further on glorify the Emperor Henry IV. They sympathize with his misfortunes, and cannot say enough against Pope Gregory. Let an army come down on Italy, commanded by Henry IV., Barbarossa, or Frederick II., if they come to expel the Pope from his chair, the fanatics of national liberty would run before the oppressors with flowers and garlands. I should not have thought of disinterring these old chronicles if our writers were not continually bringing them to light after having covered them with a wicked and deceitful gloss. The Jansenists found it more convenient to erase Gregory's name from the list of saints. They have struck out his Mass and Office from the Breviary. In certain countries of Italy, which I will not name, a wise and learned bishop, not long since, was openly reprimanded for having indicated in the diocesan calender the day on which the Church celebrates the Feast of Saint Gregory, which is fixed for the 25th of May. The other day—do not laugh, I beg of you—there was published at Milan a picture of the Popes, suppressing the word saint under the portrait of Gregory VII."

"Really! And why?" said Antoinette.

"Through love of the Emperor, to be sure; they fear to take away his sleep and appetite! . . . Is it not a refinement of solicitude?"

At these words the Countess smiled with a rather sardonic air, and cried out:

"Ah! the fools; and yet in 1848 they were anxious that the thunders of the Vatican and the sword of Saint Peter should strike him who then commanded them. And in 1858 they are afraid to give the title of saint to this Gregory VII., who had snatched the sword from the hands of Henry IV."

"*Mentita est iniquitas sibi,*" said the Canon with his deep voice.

"Do speak Italian," said Isabella; "you are always talking Latin. . . ."

"That means in Italian, my daughter, that the thoughts of the wicked are so distorted that they lie even to themselves. Their *yes* of to-day will be *no* in their mouth to-morrow, according to circumstances or their own caprice."

"To conclude," continued I, "I should never have dreamed of exhuming these old histories, but that honest men are warned to stir up these ashes and evoke these delusive phantoms. In our days there is not a single writer of any note who does not take pains to speak evil of the Popes, and particularly of Gregory VII. That saint, who is for eight hundred years among the glory of the elect, receives daily the most cruel insults; and, as if it were not enough to heap reproaches on him, they assail the Papacy in general, and with so much violence that the weak begin to ask themselves if Jesus Christ were not mistaken in transmitting the primacy to Saint Peter and his successors. All the evils of Italy are, in their eyes, the work of that august see, which shines out the most brightly when the attacks upon it are the most bitter. Hammers are broken, swords shattered, and the throne remains unshaken."

"Yes," said the prelate; "but since the learned Protestant author Voigt has so well defended Gregory VII., no honest and sensible writer can falsify history."

"Eh! my lord, they know history well enough, but they delight in disfiguring it in the eyes of the multitude. In face of the evil done by these writers, especially among ignorant and credulous youth, it becomes a duty for us, faithful and devoted children of the Church, to raise our voices and defend her against her enemies. We refute old falsehoods by old truths; it is a war which shall never end, because the enemies of the Church shall never allow her a truce. Let them be silent, and we shall do likewise."

"But," said Isabella, "they will never do it. It is really a pity! If you could hear the conversation of some young people. . . . In a word, sir, it is incredible!"

"Whoever has common sense will say, God speed you in your efforts," interrupted the Countess; "he will thank God that, in such a vortex of error, falsehood, and sophistry, there yet remains in Italy a heart generous enough to say to these wretches: 'Your assertions are false.'"

"Well!" said the young man, "but after all what is all that but the *Civiltà Cattolica?*"*

"Count," said I, "tell me, I pray you, if the Countess, your mother, who is a model among Roman ladies by her piety, prudence, and goodness, were to be calumniated by unscrupulous men, would you not feel yourself obliged to give them the lie? Would not your gentle and amiable sisters be filled with indignation, and in defending the honor of their mother would they not be defending their own? Yes, you would do it, and so would your sisters, through filial love. If infamous libels were published against her, would you not as publicly defend her, and willingly expose yourself to the hatred, fury, and resentment of those who insulted her? And if they reproached you, saying that you and your sisters only did so through family spirit, would you find the reproach well founded? Now, we are all sons of the holy Church, who is our spiritual mother. Does not the calumniator act the part of an undutiful son and create discord in the family? He who combats the Church separates himself from her, forms a sect, and cuts himself off from the Catholic family.

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* Catholic civilization.

Those who say that the *Civiltà Cattolica* ardently defends one sect abuse the word, confuse ideas, and attribute to us what is their own."

Isabella, to cut short a conversation which was embarrassing to her brother, said in a light tone:

"Father, is all that you have related of Mathilda and Yoland really historical?"

"Yes, with this exception: that Yoland is a fictitious character, portrayed in vivid colors and naturally borrowed from the customs, morals, manners, and superstitions of these rude times. As to the facts relative to the Countess Mathilda, Gregory VII., and Henry IV., they are in strict conformance with the portraits left us of these individuals by contemporary authors, of whom some, like Donizone, were eye-witnesses of their life."

"But," observed Antoinette, "why treat so much of Yoland, who often eclipses the principal character, which is really Mathilda?"

"I will tell you. You know that I was commissioned to write some amusing tales for the *Civiltà*. Now, it was therefore necessary for me to amuse my readers, and not weary them. The time of Mathilda is of itself so grave and austere that it would have been but little relished had I not endeavored to enliven it a little. Now, I desired to make myself readable to the masses, with a design of refuting a multitude of erroneous ideas on the important facts relative to the memory of the illustrious Gregory VII. I wished to publish an interesting defence of that Roman Pontiff, so often censured by Protestants, and even by bad Catholics, who dare to tax him with pride, cruelty, and injustice."

"I know," said the Canon, "that you have pleaded your cause like a skilful advocate, but Antoinette's objection still exists. Your Yoland seems like a digression."

"Gifted with a delicate perception, Antoinette shows me this defect in an artistic point of view. I admit that in my story the secondary character often somewhat eclipses the principal. Still, permit me to make a comparison. Suppose there was to be a tournament; it being only an exercise of amusement, each one seeks to make a figure therein, to display a beautiful crest, a glittering helmet, a richly-mounted sword, a war-horse splendidly caparisoned. If, on the contrary, there is a midnight attack made on a gentleman; if a criminal hand should pillage and set fire to his dwelling, he springs from his bed, takes a shield which may be rusty but strong, an old steel helmet, a well-sharpened lance, and rushes out, striking about with sword or spear. He thinks neither of elegance nor of the appearance of his arms; it suffices that they be well tempered to aid him in his defence. Apply this comparison to the present case. I am not armed for parade, but to defend my Father's house, which the enemy threatens. Little matter if my arms are rusty, provided that they be good and strong! I knew, while writing, that the episode of Yoland was excessively long, but my object was to depict at once the age of Gregory VII., and to show some modern writers that they must not judge that great Pope by the code of Napoleon, but according to the Lombard, Salic, and canonical laws of that epoch, without troubling themselves about the opinions of Fleury, Montesquieu, Thiers, and Quinet. In truth, if, as writers proclaim, opinion is queen of the world, if everything is influenced by her judgment, why then, in judging of past centuries, do they not follow the same method? In painting, that would be called a defect in local coloring, an anachronism, like the pictures of the school of Giotto, who clothes the Greeks and Romans according to the Florentine fashion of the thirteenth century; of Paul Veronese, whose characters are clad in tunics of Venetian velvet and satin; or the eccentric Paul Farinato, who introduced canons into the magnificent fresco of Bethulia. I wished to personify in Yoland the spirit of those ages of faith, and, in spite of their rude and uncultivated manners, full of truth and loyalty. There existed then but little civil law, often doubtful, ambiguous, but subject to the judgments of God. The Church alone possessed at that time, in the canonical power, wise, clear, and accurate laws, respected by Christian society, which, without their aid, would have fallen into a state of anarchy and become the prey of brute force. Our historians would cut a singular figure if, judging the Popes of the tenth century according to the Gallican ideas and the laws of Joseph II., they were to pronounce in that way upon the difficulties of Gregory and Henry.

"You remember the stir which was made in

Lombardy about an oversight on the part of Father Antonio Cesari, the translator of the comedies of Terence? In place of making one of the characters say to an interlocutor, 'I shall return in an instant,' he translated it: 'I shall return in a *Credo!*' What exultation there was over that Credo! Solemn anachronism in the mouth of a pagan! Alas! in our days how many people who have no Credo will yet judge, write, and speak of these ages of belief! How they speak of everything, nothing being sacred to them, of the exception of canonical laws, of pontifical authority, of ecclesiastical questions, of councils and synods, of which they understand nothing. They render judgments and pronounce sentences, full of oversights and blunders, which they would offer to the uninitiated as judgments without appeal."

"You are right," said the prelate. "I regard that epoch as the noblest and most glorious for Italy, which had then raised itself above all Christian nations. Was it not beautiful to see, at a period so rude and barbarous, when Europe was plunged in darkness, the Catholic court of Mathilda, the asylum of politeness and civilization, shedding its lustre to the very confines of the West, laboring for civilization, softening rudeness, reviving courtesy, elevating study and the sciences, consolidating the basis of Christian diplomacy, restraining tyranny, and showing the great how strength may be allied with justice, liberty, and love?"

"Yes," said the Countess, "I admire that illustrious royal virgin of fifteen years, riding intrepidly beside her mother, and putting to flight the schismatic troops of the Anti-Pope Cadolaüs on the Lombard plains."

"And afterwards," replied I, "with her godfather, Godfrey of Lorraine, she again annihilated on the banks of the Tiber the army of the Anti-Pope, and replaced Alexander II. on the pontifical throne. Having become Countess, she repulsed in a hundred combats the assaults of the enemies of the Church; and after having dispersed the legions of the traitor Gilbert, she restored Urban II., the lawful Pontiff, to the throne. Without allies, she withstood solely with the forces of Italy the attacks of the German armies of Henry IV. She defeated and put them to flight in Lombardy, on the fields of Sorbara, on the rocks of Monteveglio, before the walls of Canossa, on the hills of Novare, and compelled the greatest captain and most valiant sovereign of her age to retreat from a country which he had entered in triumph. Thanks to that illustrious heroine, it may be said that Italy then was true to herself, for she fought for her faith and for justice, without which there can be no true liberty. In our day, and for more than half a century, our country is combating for a liberty which is but the mask of tyrants. A few conspirators abuse the name of Italy to plot against legitimate authority, to destroy all rights, to convulse society, and stir up hatred and revenge. Always hostile to the Vicar of Christ, they threaten to extinguish in Italian hearts the last glimmer of Catholic faith."

Isabella, who began to grow tired, said:

"You were a little too austere in your story; we do not find in it those frequent descriptions which used to give us so much pleasure, or those animated little dialogues, so full of spirit. . . ."

"Alas! my dear young ladies, as to the matter of jokes, I have emptied my sack. Besides, my subject did not admit of levity; and then, if I must tell you in confidence, it seems to me that I had already abused that style in my first works. In a hundred years, if my books are still in existence, people will ask: 'What kind of a man was that? At his age, and in his position, did any one ever see such a mingling of nonsense with the most serious subjects?' Ah! if I could then thrust my head through the chinks of my coffin, I would say to these severe censors: 'Gentlemen, your words are golden, but know that mine was an age which fostered such a multitude of gazettes, journals, and reviews that every one formed their opinions according to their views, and that it was not rare to find their erroneous suggestions on the truths of religion, on morals, or politics disturbing society and destroying all notion of right or wrong. Then there was a review founded under the name of *La Civiltà Cattolica.* Its object was to treat all questions, political, social, philosophical, religious, and moral; to strive to bring back to the broad path all who had wandered into the byways. To me was confided the task of sounding the trumpet, to collect the crowd.' Now, you understand that, charged with so delicate a mission, I must, in order to attract the people, amuse and recreate them, even when they are longing, I will not say to weep, but to sleep. I wish to go out of my ordinary rôle of jester in the 'Countess Mathilda,' and I have promised myself never to return to it."

"Ah! do not say so," answered Isabella; "you would deprive us of a great pleasure! . . . We women, and young men of my brother's age, read in the review only the stories, and sometimes the news. We cannot digest those abstract treatises on constitutional government, political economy, the supremacy of the people, and transcendental philosophy. Some excuse must be made for us! . . . A joke makes us laugh, and often forces us to listen to the truth. If you fear the judgment of men of a future age, reassure yourself. They will say: 'He has taken the world on its weak side, and cast the line for the fish to nibble.' Please give us very soon a nice and very lively little story. . . . See how eagerly we shall wait for the next book! Have you any story in view?"

"No, indeed; my inkstand is dry, my pen worn out, and my fingers have grown cramped. I long to take some rest; would you be severe and exacting enough to injure my health? Let me, then, have a little time to breathe."

"And what do you consider a little time?"

"You will surely grant me the season at the Springs to take breath. You would not wish me to return to Rome in the middle of August, and scorch my brain under the dogstar's rays. . . ."

"There is nothing to hinder you from writing at the Springs. . . ."

"That is true, and I will do my best to oblige you; but if I do not satisfy you, attribute the failure to idleness."

"Do not fear that I shall do you that injustice. . . . By the way, I would like to know when and how the Countess Mathilda died."

"She died as she lived, a good and generous Christian, at her Castle of Bondeno, July 24, 1115. She was laid in a magnificent marble tomb in the Church of St. Benedict at Polirone, which she had richly endowed. That monastery still remains, after so many centuries, to celebrate the anniversary of the day of her death. The first Monday of every month all the bells are rung, a solemn Mass is sung, and alms are distributed to four thousand poor persons for the repose of that holy soul. Urban VIII. desired that her remains should rest in the Vatican near the tomb of Saint Peter, and erected a superb monument to her.

"After the famous defeat of Henry IV., Mathilda continued to govern her vast domains with firmness, love, and justice. She founded abbeys and monasteries, to which she secured considerable revenues. She built parochial churches, established chapters, erected the finest and most beautiful cathedrals of her time. These vast edifices became so numerous that there spread among the people, according to the Chronicles of Lucca, an odd enough report. The Countess Mathilda, it was said, wished to succeed in building a hundred basilicas, that she might obtain from the Pope the privilege of having the power, in spite of her sex, to celebrate the divine Mysteries.

"This admirable sovereign protected authors, honored saints, encouraged valor and bravery, sustained the rights of the Holy See, and defended sovereign pontiffs against the anti-popes and tyrants; she threw bridges over rivers, opened roads in the mountains, erected hospitals, built towers to defend the passage of the Apennines and protect travellers; she constructed impregnable fortresses, embellished cities—in a word, she confirmed Italy in peace and glory."

"You have done well," said the prelate, "to revive her memory in Italy and make it popular. She is the noblest heroine that ever rendered our country illustrious."

The whole party now arose from the turf where we had been sitting. We went down by the flowery little footpath, and separated at Aricia. Our amiable companions pursued their way to Albano, while my two friends and myself, passing by the tomb of Horatii and the Curatii, crossed the great bridge to reach Galloro.

THE END.

714

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